

SOME SOCIAL AND RELIGIOUS ASPECTS OF
ANCESTOR WORSHIP IN CHINA

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PREFACE

In the following pages an attempt is made to set forth some of the social and religious aspects of ancestor worship as it exists in China at the present time. This thesis is a study of a phase of contemporary Chinese sociology and religion. Students of religion are more and more coming to realize that their studies should be based on the practical working out of religion in the lives of the people rather than on a priori theoretical considerations. It is hoped that this work may be of value in suggesting further fields for the investigation of the religious life of the Chinese people and that it may help towards an understanding of the meaning of ancestor worship. If it deals with its fascinating subject in such a manner as to intimate its absorbing interest and lays bare any clues as to its significance, it will have served its purpose.

The method used in the preparation of this thesis has been a study of the sources in Chinese, as well as in English and French, supplemented and verified by first-hand observation of the phenomena. The historical background

has been touched upon only as it sheds light upon the topics under discussion.

Ancestral rites always have more or less social significance. They sometimes have religious significance as well. When the commemorative motive is dominant the rites may be nothing more than a memorial, but even then they have certain social consequences. Confucius was primarily interested in the social values inherent in ancestor worship but he may not have been oblivious to the patent fact that, for the masses, the rites possessed religious value. One of the outstanding characteristics of ancestor worship, which is the basic practice of the religious life of China, is, to adapt one of Dr. Arthur H. Smith's inimitable phrases, its flexible inflexibility. In this respect it is like the Chinese people. It is readily adaptable and may make concessions as well as adopt a firm attitude. As in the case of the Chinese people, these qualities have enabled it to absorb all of its conquerors. As a mighty conserving force, its strength is little affected by the presence or absence of religious feeling.

The Committee appointed by the Centenary Missionary

Conference at Shanghai in 1907 reported that ancestral worship was characteristic of almost all people in certain stages of civilization and that the arrested development and stagnation of China had made ancestor worship persist and had caused its cult to obtain a more elaborate expression in that country, thus distinguishing it from the ancestor worship found in other countries. This relic of antiquity has been largely outgrown elsewhere but China's isolation and conservatism have prevented it from being abandoned there. It is a primitive form of religion and is suited to primitive conditions. China presents a most fascinating study at the present time because of the changes which are now taking place. A panoramic epitome of history sweeps before the eye as ancient, mediaeval, and modern practices exist side by side. A cross section of the world's history is here available for study and observation.

Any description of ancestral rites is necessarily open to objections of one kind or another. The times for the performance of ancestral rites vary somewhat with local custom but the rites uniformly consist in the burning of incense, the lighting of candles, the offering of food, and the pouring out of wine accompanied by kotows or else by simple

bows. The use of invocations and the burning of paper clothes and money vary somewhat with the occasion, locality, and social group. An effort has been made to give a sketch of the general practice as far as this could be ascertained by investigation and observation. My own personal observations have largely been confined to the provinces of Hopei (formerly called Chihli) and Shantung.

Since the use of italics was not possible with a typewriter, the words that normally would be emphasized in this manner have been underlined.

I am gratefully indebted to Professor T.L.Li, Ph.D., Acting President of the Shantung Christian University, E.T.C. Werner, Esq., the Rev. D.C. Holton, Ph.D., of the Theological Department of the Kanto Gakuin, the Rev. A.K. Reischauer, D.D., LL.D., of the Theological Department of the Meiji Gakuin, and Dr. T. Kawamura, of the Department of Education of the Imperial Japanese Government for helpful suggestions as to the precise nature of the study which I have undertaken and as to the best methods of treatment. To Dr. Frank Rawlinson, the gifted editor of The Chinese Recorder, I am greatly indebted for guidance and for many valuable hints as to available sources that might be consulted.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

PART ONE

SOME SOCIAL ASPECTS OF ANCESTOR WORSHIP IN CHINA

	Page
Introduction. Theories as to origin. Undoubted antiquity of ancestor worship.	1
Chapter I. THE CONFUCIAN ATTITUDE TOWARD ANCESTOR WORSHIP. Confucius emphasized it. Animistic ideas connected with it did not originate with Confucius. He prized the rites for their social value. Indirectly opened the way for the growth of animistic ideas. Left an unsolved problem. Doctrine of the Mean. Mencius. Hsüntze. Social value emphasized by the Confucian school.	10
Chapter II. ANCESTOR WORSHIP AND CONSERVATISM. Geographical isolation of China. Cultural situation. Ancestor worship took the place of patriotism as a	24

conserving factor. Conservatism strengthened by the attitude of Confucius. Conservatism of the Classics. How the tradition supporting ancestor worship became strong. Effect upon the educational system. Political paternalism. Family supreme in the social realm. Ancestor worship furnishes a key to the understanding of Chinese history.

Chapter III.	THE SOCIAL CONSEQUENCES OF ANCESTOR	
	WORSHIP. Social solidarity. Promoted	34
	family unity. Success honors ancestors.	
	Social ends of religion. Family	
	responsibility. Family loyalty	
	fundamental. Social significance of	
	marriage. Desire for posterity. The	
	clan. Clan temples. Ancestral land.	
	Clan conflicts. Attitude toward	
	children. Size of the population.	
	Unequal distribution of population.	
	Art. Architecture and feng-shui.	

	Industry. Agriculture. Morality.	
	Education. Government. Judicial	
	Decisions. International relations.	
Chapter IV.	UNIVERSALITY OF ANCESTOR WORSHIP.	62
	Ancestor worship central in Chinese	
	religious life. Universal belief in	
	spirits. Confucianism, Buddhism, and	
	Taoism. Mohammedanism. Eclectic	
	sects. Extent of the practice.	
	Attitude of certain Chinese emigrants.	
Chapter V.	MODERN ATTITUDE.	74
	Decline among certain classes and in	
	certain places only. Modern disinteg-	
	ration of the family. Removal of	
	social pressure. Criticism of the past.	
	Forward look. Modern student class.	
	Dr. Hu Shih. Effect of travel or study	
	abroad. A typical example. Extreme	
	individualism. The study of science.	
	The materialistic class. Emigrants.	
	Communism. The Nationalists-Sun Yat-Sen.	
	Present attitude of the Nationalists.	

Robbery of the Imperial tombs an indication of the changed attitude towards the resting places of the deceased. Some predict the passing of ancestor worship. What would the Chinese then hold to? If it should pass, later marriage might result. Some expect it to continue in a modified form. Can ancestor worship be transformed into patriotism? Sun Yat-Sen-ism. Taking China as a whole, ancestor worship will not pass quickly.

PART TWO

SOME RELIGIOUS ASPECTS OF ANCESTOR WORSHIP IN CHINA

Chapter VI. FILIAL PIETY.

106

Ancestor worship is a part of the fundamental duty of filial piety in Confucianism. Founded upon continuity of the family. Proverbs. "The Classic

of Filial Piety". Composition of the character "hsiao". The service which filial piety calls for. Sun Yat-Sen on filial devotion. A modern view of filial piety in China as compared with the West. The weakness and strength of Chinese filial piety.

Chapter VII. ANCESTRAL RITES. 120

Belief in three souls. Three altars.
 Clan temples. Semi-monthly rites.
 Bronze sacrificial vessels. Ceremonies accompanying the taking of an Imperial spirit-tablet to the ancestral temple.
 Worship in the home. More remote ancestors not worshipped in the home.
 Grass images and "personators".
 Traditional account of origin of ancestral tablet. Description of an ancestral tablet.

I. Rites performed before ancestral tablets.

A. Daily bow.

B. **Anniversaries** of births and deaths of ancestors.

C. Important family matters are reported.

1. Birth of a child.

2. Betrothal.

3. When a youth comes of age.

4. Marriage.

5. Important matters were reported to Imperial ancestors.

6. Death.

D. Festival of Spirits.

E. The Mid-Autumn Festival.

F. The Winter Solstice.

Chapter VIII. **ANCESTRAL RITES** (Continued).

143

G. The New Year.

In the home. Account of a New Year visit. Students are making changes in the rites. Description of the New Year sacrifices in a clan temple.

II. Burial.

III. At the grave.

A. Feast of Lanterns.

B. Ching Ming.

C. Festival of Spirits.

D. First day of the tenth month.

E. The Winter Solstice.

F. The New Year.

IV. Official mourning for the deceased.

Chapter IX. THE MEANING OF ANCESTOR WORSHIP. 169

Inner attitude of sacrificer most important. The kotow does not always denote worship. Other external forms used are likewise indeterminate. Terms used are inconclusive as evidence. Examination of motives necessary. Continued largely because of tradition. Conformity to social standards. Force of habit.

Motives:

I. Commemoration.

II. Propitiation.

- III. Reciprocal assistance between
the living and the dead.
- IV. Conservation of the family and
the clan.
- V. Inculcation of the familist
theory of social relationships.

The motives listed in the order of
their importance. Objectionable
elements. The attitude of Confucius.
Theory versus practice. Ancestral
rites denote real worship in some
cases.

Chapter X. BENEFICIAL RESULTS OF ANCESTOR WORSHIP. 213

- I. Moral or ethical values. Desire to
live so as to honor ancestors.
Ancestor worship provides moral
restraint. Trains, directs, and
satisfies human emotions.
- II. Social values. Conservation of
the social structure. Preserv-
ation of the nation through five
thousand years of history.

To a certain extent marriage has been exalted.

III. Educational value. Practical instruction in civics.

IV. Religious values. Faith in a future life. Reverence and filial devotion fostered. Affords real consolation. Values that may be utilized and built upon by Christianity.

Chapter XI. HARMFUL EFFECTS OF ANCESTOR WORSHIP. 232

I. Moral or ethical effects.

Respectful fear rather than affection often rules the family. Parents honored more after death than during life. Dishonesty condoned when it is for the benefit of the family. Family loyalty sometimes subversive of good ethics. Introduction of enslaving feng-shui doctrines.

II. Social effects. Large, unchecked increase in population. Lowered

position of woman. Girls
 regarded as of little value.
 Personality of the younger
 generation sacrificed. Check
 upon progress. Economic waste.
 Political and commercial
 nepotism condoned. Over-emphasis
 on the importance of the family.
 Clannishness fostered.

III. Educational effect. Harmful
 effect on education.

IV. Religious effects. Low, selfish,
 material type of religion.
 Spirits of the dead dependent
 upon the living. Disregards
 moral distinctions. Inadequate
 view of future life. Leaves out
 God.

Chapter XII.	ANCESTOR WORSHIP AND CHRISTIANITY.	251
	Roman Catholic attitude towards ancestor worship-the Rites Controversy. Protestant attitude.	

Most of the popular opposition to Christianity is due to ancestor worship. Attitude of Chinese Christians. Can ancestor worship be reformed or must it be entirely overthrown? Objectionable features. Suggested antidotes. Ancestor worship will be continued by many in a modified form. Practical, constructive measures suggested for Christians. Christianity must take the place of the religious elements of ancestor worship. Christianity fulfills the desire for the highest filial ideals and standards. Chinese Christians, guided by the Spirit of God, must settle the question of the attitude Christianity shall assume towards ancestor worship.

Appendix Two.

289

Bibliography.

291

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

	Page
Millions of graves dot Chinese landscapes.	16
Facsimile of an ancestral tablet.	25
Facsimile of an ancestral tablet with outer piece removed.	39
Spirit-world banknote issued by the "Bank of Hades".	53
A type of paper money burned at the grave by Taoists.	64
Tumulus containing two graves.	82
Spirit-world banknote issued by the "Bank of Hades and Heaven".	96
An ancestral tablet is kept in a wooden case when not in use.	110
Sacrificial altar and incense urn before a non-Christian grave.	131
A type of paper money burned at the grave by Buddhists.	154
Appearance of a grave on the first day of the tenth month.	167
A Christian grave.	183
Ching Ming service at a Christian cemetery, Peking.	195

PART ONE

SOME SOCIAL ASPECTS OF ANCESTOR WORSHIP IN CHINA

INTRODUCTION

Ancestor worship appears to have existed in China from the most ancient times but, like other practices, it must have originated during some definite period in the distant past. Various theories have been advanced to account for its origin.

An apparently plausible explanation of the origin of ancestor worship is suggested by the dictates of patriotism. At a very ancient time the tendency to exalt the rulers of the past became noticeable. The historical records constantly enlarge on the virtues of the early Emperors, Yao and Shun. Did patriotic desire, consciously or unconsciously, suggest to the ruling house that the conservation and unification of the nation might be achieved by the worship of early heroes, and was it possible that the strong desire to perpetuate the ruling dynasty in power by deifying its early Emperors brought about ancestor worship? It undeniably has outstanding social value as a mighty conserving force and this must have impressed the leading figures of the dynasty in power. There is much that might be said in favor of this view and it may serve to emphasize a strong motive which undoubtedly

was an important factor in causing the ruling house to worship their ancestors;but its advocates are faced with the necessity of explaining how the common people started to worship their ancestors. It might be urged that ancestor worship was gradually permitted to the common people in imitation of the ancestor worship of the ruling house 1, and,in view of the fact that the power of example seems to have been stronger in China than in any other nation,and conformity to social customs and traditions has been enforced by the power of a public opinion nothing short of machine-like in its operation,this reasoning would not be devoid of cogency. Undoubtedly,the desire to conserve and unify the nation was a factor in the rise of ancestor worship but it was not the only factor. It is rather to be regarded as a partial explanation of the growth of ancestor worship than as a satisfactory account of how it came to start,for ancestor worship was more spontaneous in its origin than any such well conceived plan as the one just outlined would allow.

1 C. de Harlez,Les Croyances religieuses des premiers Chinois,p.49.

Another explanation of how ancestor worship originated is advanced by Professor Hopkins who states that it developed from the ghost worship which was preserved as ancestor worship by the Mongolians. He holds that it is to be traced to the Mongolian savages who practiced Shamanism in its crudest form. Ancestors were regarded as great powers apart from the gods. People ministered to their needs and used them as really active agents in the spiritual world. Ancestors were approached through the Shaman priest and higher gods were approached through the ancestors while lower gods were approached direct. According to this view, Chinese ancestor worship is simply a ritual of refined Shamanism. 2 The vulnerable point in this theory is found in the fact that at no time in Chinese history has it been necessary to approach ancestors through the medium of human priesthood. From the earliest times it has been possible to worship ancestors directly, without the aid of a mediator. We should certainly expect to find some trace of a mediator in the history of Chinese ancestor worship if it had come into being through

2 Hopkins, Origin and Evolution of Religion.

an adaptation or an imitation of Shamanism. Furthermore, certain elements of magic which are bound up with Shamanism are lacking in Chinese ancestor worship.

Giles accounts for the origin of ancestor worship by the meditation of primeval man in the presence of a corpse aided by the superstitious ideas that have become part of his mental equipment. His explanation is as follows, "We have seen that the belief in the existence of spirits finds its first expression in the worship of ancestors. In the presence of death, primeval man in China must have sought for some explanation of the body, just now full of life and movement, then, suddenly, an inert mass. Aided by dreams, in which the dead so often reappear, he must gradually have come to regard the body as matter informed by a vital essence, the separation of which produced the phenomenon of death. As time went on, a spirituality associated with thunder, wind, rain, rivers, trees, and mountains, gradually crystallized into beings susceptible of propitiation and able to confer benefits upon mankind." ³ According to this view, which is held by many scholars, the origin of ancestor

³ H.A.Giles, Confucianism and its Rivals, p.93.

worship is to be found in animism. Ancestors came to be regarded as spirits and were worshipped along with other spirits such as mountains, rivers, etc. When we have added to this explanation the legal and social traditions which grew up in China, just as they did in Rome ⁴, in connection with the bequest of property from ancestors, we have the explanation which commends itself to reason as being most in accord with the facts. It has been succinctly put by Chiang Liu, "Ancestor worship had its origins in the bequest of property from ancestors and the notion that ancestors would, as deities or spirits, afford protection to their offspring or favor them with the blessings of prosperity and plenty." ⁵ The Chinese are an intensely practical people and there is no doubt that practical considerations such as these have always appealed to them. It should be noted that this explanation of the origin of ancestor worship recognizes the fact that the rites were from the

⁴ See article on "ancestor worship" in the Encyclopaedia Britannica, Eleventh Edition.

⁵ Chinese Recorder, April, 1928. "Present-Day Attitude Towards 'Ancestor Worship'. A Symposium", Chiang Liu, p. 231.

beginning felt to be of great social as well as religious value.

Though perhaps insufficient to explain the origin of ancestor worship, a factor that must be reckoned with in any account of its rise is to be found in the custom which dates from the earliest times that Shang Ti, or the Supreme Being, could be worshipped only by the Emperor, the Son of Heaven, as the High Priest of his people. The desire, on the part of the common people to worship was so strong that it had to find an outlet. Since they were not allowed to worship Shang Ti, they worshipped the superior or past generation, which was regarded as worthy of honor inasmuch as it was nearer to Shang Ti than the present generation was. Ancestor worship was the only form of popular religion, properly speaking, which the people were legally entitled to have, and all other forms of popular religion were regarded as heterodox, and hence were under the ban of the state. The ritual regulations in the dynastic statutes were laid down exclusively for this cult.

Whatever may have been the origin of ancestor worship, there can be no doubt of its hoary antiquity. Its beginning is shrouded in mystery in the dim reaches of the prehistoric

past. It far antedates the oldest authentic historical records. It has been customary to say that the earliest reference to it is found in the Book of History where it is plainly stated that the worship of ancestors was observed during the reign of Shun, B.C. 2250. In the temple of the "Accomplished Ancestor", Shun was crowned, and in the same holy place Yü, his successor, received the power from his hands. 6 Important acts such as those affecting the succession to the throne were performed in the presence of the imperial ancestors. Mention is made of the minister of religion who was called the "Arranger of the Ancestral Temple". It is recorded of Shun, that when he returned from his tours of inspection, "he went to the temple of the Cultivated Ancestor, and offered a single bullock". 7

Scholars of Chinese history are now inclined to assign to the Book of History a later date than was formerly given. Yao and Shun are held to be legendary heroes or mythological

6 The Chinese Classics, translated by James Legge, Vol. III, Part I, The First Parts of the Shoo-King and the Prologomena, Part II, Book I, Ch. III, 4, p. 32.

7 Ibid, Part II, Book I, Ch. III, 8, p. 37.

gods whose deeds and characters grew with the telling until they had little resemblance to the original historical personages who bore these names. The stories told about these men gradually came to be regarded as historically true. Part of the blame may be laid on later editors of the ancient classics who probably, either consciously or unconsciously, exaggerated the virtues of these early heroes in order to support their theories of the innate goodness of human nature and the magical moral power of a good example. There are some who go so far as to say that the entire account dealing with Yao and Shun is the pious fabrication of some zealous but misguided editor of the early records. 8

It is now held that authentic Chinese history starts with the Yin or Shang dynasty. There is no archeological evidence in support of historical data prior to that date. The earliest historical records are not the Book of History or other parts of the Classics but the records preserved in the primitive characters carved on bone fragments.

8 See 古事辨, Debatable Sections of Ancient History, by 谷季綱, Ku Chi Kang.

A large number of these bone fragments have been discovered and are now being carefully examined by Chinese and foreign students of history. The earliest of the records on the bone fragments dates from the Yin or Shang dynasty. On these bone fragments there are many evidences that ancestor worship was carried on and many references are made to the cult. Regardless of the fact that there is grave doubt as to the historicity of Yao and Shun, it nevertheless remains that the most ancient Chinese historical records frequently and naturally mention ancestor worship thus indicating that it was, even at that early date, an old established cult and not a recent innovation.

CHAPTER I

THE CONFUCIAN ATTITUDE TOWARD ANCESTOR WORSHIP

Ancestor worship did not originate with Confucius, but he gave it such an impetus that it became the most important form of popular religion in China, and was incorporated into all of the religions that were native to China or that came from other countries, except Mohammedanism and Christianity. It is the most fundamental social and religious practice in the world's oldest nation and, as such, commands respect and challenges study.

Confucius is often spoken of as a religious teacher but he merely emphasized and personified an ancient system of ethics. His influence on the social life of the Chinese was as great, if not greater, than his influence on their religious life. The attitude of Confucius, and of the generations of scholars whose thinking has been moulded by his philosophy, toward ancestor worship has profoundly influenced the Chinese people.

Confucius called himself, "a transmitter, not a maker, believing in and loving the ancients". He was an editor rather than an originator. He commended very strongly the ancient teachings, heartily endorsed them and put upon them the stamp of his unqualified approval. He did not attempt to criticize or change old customs, and the thought of adding new ones never appealed to him; in fact, such a thought would have seemed to his conservative mind to be consummately disrespectful to the sacred past. Change seemed the acme of impiety to him. He found ancestor worship practiced on the basis of the teachings in the ancient literature which he edited and which became forthwith classical and authoritative. He focused the attention of the people on these records and fixed their gaze upon the distant past, where it has remained steadfastly until modern times, when new movements, such as the Revolution and the Renaissance, have succeeded in reversing, for an ever increasing number of the people of ancient Cathay, this backward look.

Confucius not only sanctioned but also emphasized ancestor worship by his personal example and by his teaching. "He sacrificed to the dead as if they were present; he sacrificed to the spirits as if they were present" and

countless millions have followed his example. The two "as if's" would seem to indicate that the supreme motive in ancestor worship in the case of Confucius was one of commemoration. With him, the reverence of parents was an integral part of filial piety. He said, "The services of love and reverence to them when alive, and those of grief and sorrow for them when dead, - these completely discharge the fundamental duty of living men". One of the five characteristics of the model son is, "in sacrificing to them he displays the utmost solemnity". He also said, "I consider my not being at the sacrifice as if I did not sacrifice". He regarded the care of the aged as one of the most important and fundamental duties of mankind.

The animistic ideas popularly connected with ancestor worship in the minds of the common people, which form one of the most objectionable features of ancestor worship, cannot be said to have had their origin in the teachings of Confucius. The evidences of animistic beliefs and practices are so numerous throughout Chinese history that they must have existed from prehistoric times. Confucius disapproved of this prevalent animism. He cautioned his disciples against the worship of spirits beyond the family circle and

warned them against superstition and other evils that might arise from the abuse of the worship of ancestors and the departed great. He cannot be blamed for the transformation of the deceased into tutelary divinities. This belief sprang from the human heart as much as from any other source. It must be borne in mind also that Confucius was not responsible for the superstitions connected with feng-shui. These arose later from Taoist sources. In connection with the absurd doctrine that the destinies of a family were determined by the location of the family tombs, the way was opened for the growth of many abuses. 1 In the face of the animistic beliefs, customs, and superstitions which surrounded him and oppressed and terrified the Chinese of his day, Confucius refused to discuss, "extraordinary things, feats of strength, disorder, and spiritual beings". There can be little doubt that, were he alive today, Confucius would adopt a similar attitude towards many of the Taoist and other superstitions now prevalent.

1 W.A.P. Martin, *The Lore of Cathay*, p. 269.

His practical,materialistic,and agnostic attitude has had incalculable influence on millions of his fellow countrymen. The Analects say,"Chî Lû asked about serving the spirits of the dead. The Master said,'While you are not able to serve men,how can you serve their spirits?'" 2 "To give one's self earnestly," said Confucius,"to the duties due to men,and,while respecting spiritual beings,to keep aloof from them,may be called wisdom". 3 As a practical thinker primarily interested in ethical,social,and political reforms he limited himself to the present life,in the mundane sphere,and adopted a noncommittal attitude towards the future. He did not know for certain with regard to the future life and he was unwilling to speculate for fear of adding to the mass of superstition already burdening the people. It must be reiterated that he was interested far more in political and social reformation than in religion. He gave a shrewd exemplification of his doctrine of the "Golden Mean" when,in reply to the question,"Do the dead

2 The Chinese Classics,translated by James Legge,Vol. I, Confucian Analects,XI,xi,pp.240-241.

3 Ibid,VI,xx,p.191.

have knowledge of our services, or are they without knowledge?", he answered, "If I were to say that the dead have such knowledge, I am afraid that filial sons and dutiful grandsons would injure their substance in paying the last offices to the departed; if I were to say that the dead have not such knowledge, I am afraid lest unfilial sons would leave their parents unburied. You need not wish to know whether the dead have knowledge or not. There is no present urgency about the point. Hereafter you will know it for yourself." Why, then, should he have enjoined the strict observance of rites which he regarded as of doubtful benefit to departed ancestors? These services he considered to be of prime importance in keeping alive conservatism and reverence for the past or superior age. They were performed primarily for the sake of the living. The emotions aroused by a sense of filial duty required expression. Regardless of whether or not the dead were cognizant of the offerings presented, it was the duty of the living to show their affectionate respect by offering those things which pleased the departed while here. Confucius had too high an opinion of the social value of ancestral rites to be willing to discard them.



Photograph by the Author.

**MILLIONS OF GRAVES DOT
CHINESE LANDSCAPES**

Burial ground for the poor near Chefoo on the first day of the tenth month. In the upper part of the picture, several men are seen preparing to sacrifice, and at the right, the smoke of the paper being burned may be noticed.

The spirit had gone out of ancestral rites for Confucius but he kept them up and urged others to do likewise. He was very fond of ceremony, and this fact must be constantly borne in mind, if any fair interpretation of his life and teachings is to be reached. He felt that formality, though inferior to sincerity, was better than nothing at all. When Tzu Kung wished to dispense with the live sheep presented in the Ducal Temple at the announcement of the new moon, Confucius refused to consent, for he felt that the ceremony was of too much value to be abandoned.⁴ His idea with regard to the worship of ancestors seems to have been more like that of a reverent tryst with the past than a literal worship of spirits but many who imitated him had much grosser and less exalted ideas.

It must be admitted that, by endorsing ancestor worship, he indirectly made possible the continuance and growth of a vast amount of animism. He did not definitely teach life after death and he issued a warning against excesses and irregularities, and yet, his emphasis upon the importance

⁴ The Chinese Classics, translated by James Legge, Vol. I, Confucian Analects, III, xvii.

of the ceremonies and his own practice clearly showed that he believed in the existence of spirits after death. He did not think it necessary to state this belief positively as he simply took it for granted. He failed to denounce the idea that the dead may have knowledge, and may bless and protect or send misfortune and trouble. Though he personally disapproved of the animistic ideas connected in the popular mind with ancestral worship, he did not cut the roots of the beliefs by openly attacking them. His failure was due to his mistaken attitude towards superstition. He held that the best way to combat superstition was to ignore it. By continuing to observe and to emphasize ancestral rites, without condemning current, popular animistic beliefs connected therewith, Confucius left an antinomy which he did not attempt to solve. It was natural that his disciples should take different attitudes towards this problem.

One of them, the author of the Doctrine of the Mean, reverted to the primitive, animistic belief that the spirits of the dead were actually alive and active in human affairs, so that at the sacrifices, "like overflowing water, they seem to be over the heads, and on the right and left of their

worshippers." 5 While this belief might be held among the uneducated, it was not acceptable to the literati trained in the agnosticism of the Confucian school. It was too crude to appeal to their refined taste.

Mencius maintained the customary sacrifices, including those to ancestors, as a matter of course, but he was primarily interested in the inculcation of the morals of his master. He seems to have given up all belief in the existence of spirits of any sort, including those of ancestors, for he does not even mention them. However he had not solved the problem left by Confucius for he emphasized the ritual observances for the dead even more than his master. He gave his own mother such an expensive and elaborate burial that other Confucians criticized him for it. He emphasized ritual and yet he believed that there was no religious element in ancestral worship. He was unable to resolve this inconsistency in his own thought and so he made no attempt to explain the meaning of ancestral worship. Like many other scholars, he refused to discard religious forms, to which he could no longer give intellectual consent, because

5 The Chinese Classics, translated by James Legge, Vol. I, The Doctrine of the Mean, XVI, 3, p. 398.

he felt them to be of great importance as moral and social restraints. 6 Mencius, then, brings us no nearer to the solution of the problem left by Confucius.

The conflict between the purely commemorative and the religious aspects of ancestor worship is to be found running through all the history of ancestor worship but it came to a head in Hsüntze. He boldly cut the Gordian knot and made a definite attempt to eliminate the religious elements from ancestor worship. It must not be thought, though, that he in any way discouraged the practice. Dubs writes, "Hsüntze realized, even more than Confucius and Mencius, the moral and sociological importance of the ceremonial observances which centered around the family worship of its departed ones. Yet he went even farther than they in eliminating everything that savored of superstition from the life of an orthodox Confucian. Not only did he deny the existence of all spirits and the worth of divination and other dealings with them, but he denies the existence of any spiritual Power in the universe". 7

6 Chinese Recorder, August, 1927, article by H.H. Dubs on "The Confucian Attitude to the Worship of Ancestors", p. 501.

7 Ibid, p. 502.

This attitude was undoubtedly a reaction against the popular animistic belief in and worship of spirits, especially the spirits of ancestors. He held that no help could be expected from the spirits and that the worship of them was of no ethical value and yet he strongly stressed the importance of living a moral life. It is said, "This combination of religious scepticism with ethical fervour has been characteristic of Confucianism all through the ages. Hsüntze brought to a logical conclusion the movement in this direction which had been started by Confucius. In so far he might be said to have been more consistently Confucian than Confucius himself. Undoubtedly the existence of this sceptical strain of thought in one of the greatest of ancient Confucianists has done much to mould later Chinese thought." 8

How, then, did he explain the necessity for sacrifice to ancestors? He claims that it is necessary for the sake of the living rather than the dead. Sacrifice is the catharsis of emotion. Disciples of Freud would find in

8 H.H.Dubs, Hsüntze, The Moulder of Ancient Confucianism, p.73.

Hsüntze, support for their dogma of the necessity for expressing every deep-seated impulse. Hsüntze states that man's thoughts, memories, and longings need expression; the impulse they give is extremely strong and needs relief. Because of the surge of this emotion, rites were established to honor the honored prince and love the beloved parent; sacrifice is a beautiful series of actions to give expression and relief to human emotions. Music, mourning garments, "cleaning the temple, spreading out tables and mats, offering animals and grain, praying for blessings, as if the deceased enjoyed the sacrifice; taking the offerings and offering them all as if the deceased tasted them; offering the three-legged wine-cup without washing it; for the one who sacrifices to have a wine bottle ready as if the deceased drank from his goblet; when the guests leave for the host (who is the sacrificer), to bow them off, change to his mourning clothes, and sit down and cry, as if the spirit of the departed had left--this is sorrow, reverence, serving the dead as if serving the living, serving the departed as if serving those who are present; an appearance without the inner reality, imagery become a ritual." 9

9 The Works of Hsüntze, translated by H.H.Dubs, XIX, 21-22, pp. 244-6.

For Confucius and his school, ancestor worship had little, if any, religious value but great social value. For many others, too ignorant to understand the agnostic basis of the Confucian tradition, it had great religious value as well as great social value, but it is unnecessary to enlarge on this distinction here as it will be discussed when the import of ancestor worship is dealt with in a subsequent chapter.

CHAPTER II

ANCESTOR WORSHIP AND CONSERVATISM

Long ere the Chinese people ever appeared on the scene, the stage had been set for the natural growth of the world's most conservative nation. The geographical isolation of the land to which the Chinese people migrated in early times and in which they grew to be a mighty nation, provided an ideal setting for the evolution which was to take place. The vast country was separated from the rest of continental Asia by lofty plateaus and rugged mountain ranges on the west. On the southwest and south, high mountains and deep valleys served to make the roads to Burma and Tongking hard to traverse. It was true that on the narrow, northeastern border the country was easy of access by way of Manchuria, but Manchuria, before the days of railroads, was also isolated. China was thus cut off from the rest of the world save by long sea routes. The result was that China had few international contacts.

Surrounded by peoples of inferior culture who were virtually barbarians, China's development was different from



Photograph by Ah Fong.

FACSIMILE OF AN ANCESTRAL TABLET
(See text on page 135).

that of nations in other parts of the world who were surrounded by civilizations equal to, or even superior to, their own. She was deprived of the stimulating contacts that otherwise might have been hers and the natural result was that her pride was heightened and she developed a feeling of smug self-sufficiency. She had warlike neighbors who, at times, conquered her, and yet each time she slowly but surely absorbed her conquerors; and in the nineteenth century when she began to have more contacts with European powers, she was surrounded by tributary and vassal states, who sent yearly tribute to the Dragon Throne of the Emperor in Peking. Her self-satisfaction, born of the consciousness of the possession of an ancient and superior civilization, grew with the realization of the cultural weakness of her neighbors. It was not to be expected that a nation so manifestly superior to surrounding nations as China was, should feel any strong need for change or progress, and the opposite tendency—to look to the glorified past for inspiration and instruction—was correspondingly strengthened. The geographical situation of China serves to explain, in part at least, the growth of the inherent conservatism which became so characteristic of the nation.

Moreover, in the forces behind ancestor worship are to be found the perennial reinforcements of the conservative tendencies of the Chinese. Ancestor worship is the basis of the old social order and makes for extreme conservatism. This conservatism takes the place of the patriotism which the Chinese lack. Dr. Sun Yat-Sen, in trying to set up the Chinese Republic, recognized the necessity for connecting this loyalty to the past, normally expressed in ancestor worship, with love of country. All change is, in one form or another, inimical to ancestor worship since it must make for a modification of the old social order. Hence the friends of the old social order felt that they must oppose change at any cost. Is there not here an explanation of the rise of much of the anti-foreign feeling which has periodically made its appearance in China? Foreigners brought new ideas which led inevitably to changes and hence struck at the social and religious roots of Chinese civilization. At times the Chinese have felt the framework of their social structure tremble as the gales of progress have borne down upon it and it is not to be wondered at that they have feared lest the whole building should suddenly collapse upon them.

The conservatism which ruled ancient China was greatly strengthened by the attitude and teaching of Confucius. He refused to discuss, "extraordinary things, feats of strength, disorder, and spiritual beings." ¹ Others might essay the role of innovator. Confucius was content to keep to the tried, staid, and orthodox topics. With all of his strength, he held fast to the past, for he believed that by so doing, he could make his best contribution to his beloved native land. His theory was that political and social life could be reformed by imitating the great figures who loomed up in the golden days of the past. He earnestly advocated a return to the ways of the ancients. He was not slow to recognize that, for the purpose of directing the attention of the people to the past, no better means could be found than the emphasizing of ancestor worship. He recognized that ancestor worship was invaluable, nay even indispensable, to him for the accomplishment of his cherished plans and he quite logically admitted it as an integral part of his system.

¹ The Chinese Classics, translated by James Legge, Vol. I, Confucian Analects, VII, xx, p. 201.

The pronounced conservatism of the Chinese Classics stands out as one of their most prominent and characteristic features. Their basic theme is the glorification of ancient heroes and the preservation of the priceless records of a Golden Age in the past and again and again in the symphony, after the possibilities of the theme have been artistically demonstrated by many variations, the original melody breaks forth. At this point, Confucianism, by its continuous emphasis upon the glorious times of the early sages, places the Golden Age in the past, and adopts an attitude opposite to that of Christianity, which holds out a hope for the future and urges the world to look forward to a Golden Age in the future and to make progress. It is impossible to estimate exactly how much we read into the Classics or how much was read into them by late editors. They may have been changed in order to give more support to conservative tendencies that were dominant at a later period.

In view of these facts, it can be readily seen how the tradition supporting ancestor worship became very strong. It became a fixed custom to be inflexibly observed, and, at the present time, thanks to the social pressure of public opinion, most of the people simply follow the tradition as a

matter of course, without pausing to ask themselves the meaning of the rites or why they observe them. The thought of what one's neighbors and friends might say, in case one dared to drop the ancient custom upholding ancestral rites, has been a powerful deterrent to those who have been faced with this temptation.

A conservative tendency prompted the exaltation of the Classics and made of them the textbooks of China's educational system. It was logical that government officials and teachers should be selected from among those who were proficient in the Classics. Reverence for the past was carried so far that it was taught that the last word on the science of government had been spoken in these ancient writings. Ancestor worship helped to bring about this state of affairs.

Conservatism resulted in political paternalism. The Emperor was the Father of his people. They were his children. The absolutism of the Imperial power was founded upon a reverence for authority and for government which was fostered by ancestor worship. The government of the country and of the community was controlled by and for the elders. In the Doctrine of the Mean, Confucius is reported to have

said, "Now filial piety is seen in the skilful carrying out of the wishes of our forefathers, and the skilful carrying forward of their undertakings." ² Every man is duty bound to carry out the will of his ancestors and this necessity is particularly imperative in the case of the Emperors.

Hence change was regarded as disrespectful and the Emperors persecuted the sects that failed to conform to the classical or state religion. In this religion, the worship of Heaven by the Emperor and of ancestors by the common people was regarded as the logical order and anything that went contrary to this rule was considered to be revolt.

In the social realm, the family was supreme. Ancestor worship insured that the first and greatest loyalty should go to the family rather than to the Church or the State. The result was the patriarchal system which was carried to the highest stage of development to be found anywhere in the world. A child was placed under the absolute control of its father or mother and was forbidden to withdraw from that authority. Attention was riveted on the ancestors rather than on the descendants of the family. After a few

² The Chinese Classics, translated by James Legge, Vol. I, Doctrine of the Mean, XIX, 2.

generations, the family developed into a clan, over which the patriarch or matriarch naturally ruled. This system fostered conservatism for it placed control in the hands of the elder generation, who had recovered from the fevers of youth and become mellowed by age, and were inclined to uphold the past and oppose changes. The patriarchal system of social organization was indispensable to ancestor worship. If this system were to undergo change, ancestor worship would also be affected. The individual is held in line by the iron grip of immemorial custom in connection with an elaborate system. He is of secondary importance. He is simply a link in a chain which has its origin in the dim past and which stretches into the distant future. The family is the primary unit. It includes all past, present, and future generations. After a time the individual passes from the scene but the family goes on forever. The individual is concerned with keeping up the traditions and passing on the torch undimmed. The interests of the family and the dictates of family loyalty call for the continuance of the rites. The center of the family life is the ancestral altar and this altar accompanies the family whenever it moves.

One of the best keys to the understanding of Chinese history is to be found in ancestor worship. It explains both the good and the bad in the history of the Chinese people. From early times appeal was made to the people to do good on the basis of what their ancestors would say. 3 Ancestor worship, as a conserving power, strengthened family and clan bonds, helped to preserve the best in China's past, insured the permanence of Chinese institutions, and bound the whole nation together. On the other hand, it aggravated the stagnation which followed the early and rapid advance of Chinese civilization to a high point of perfection. The invention of printing, the manufacture of paper, the use of the mariner's compass, and the invention of gun-powder took place in China centuries before their reinvention and adaptation in the West. Ancestor worship enthralled China in a backward look while European nations were surpassing her in the realm of science.

3 The Sacred Books of the East, Vol. III, The Sacred Books of China, translated by James Legge, Part I, The Hsiao King, Chap. I, p. 467.

CHAPTER III

THE SOCIAL CONSEQUENCES OF ANCESTOR WORSHIP

Ancestor worship in China resulted in a social solidarity,unequaled anywhere else in the world. The Chinese people,conscious of their connection with a glorious past,have a unique feeling of stability,continuity,and confidence. They feel that they are links in a chain which stretches back to remote antiquity. The dead are counted along with the living. Professor Monroe reports that,"Around Canton,until recent reforms appropriated those choice spots for suburban residences,the visible ancestral population was estimated at five times greater than the living." 1

Not only are the dead reckoned as being present with the living but the living are held together by special bonds. The strongest unity is that of the family. So strong has the family become that it is the primary social unit and fills the place in China which is occupied by the individual in

1 Monroe,China:a Nation in Evolution,p.23.

Western countries. The ties of kinship are very strong. Sons, though married, live with their parents. Most Chinese families consist of from two to three generations. A family of four generations is seldom found and when it is found the oldest generation is represented by an aged person at the door of death. Some families have lived together for several centuries. Until the recent movement opposing large families started, they were regarded as models. The worship of ancestors held the large family together. The effect of ancestor worship has been to exalt and unify the family and put it at the center of the social system. So anxious was Confucius to emphasize the unity of the family that there are instances where in order to do so, he considerably lowered his ethical ideal, as, for example, where he urged a son to protect his father even if it were necessary to tell a lie in order to accomplish this purpose.² Many villages are composed exclusively of the members of one family or clan and the common loyalty of the members of the group is brought to a focus by the ancestral temple. Each family

² The Chinese Classics, translated by James Legge, Vol. I, Confucian Analects, XIII, xviii, p. 270.

is an imperium in imperio over which the father or grandfather is supreme. In order to preserve family unity it is necessary that the sons stay at, or near, home, if possible, and so we read, "The Master said: 'While his parents are alive, the son may not go abroad to a distance. If he does go abroad, he must have a fixed place to which he goes.'"³ This characterization of a roving son as unfilial has served to strengthen family unity. Many other motives have also operated to make men eager to preserve intact their family life. Tradition, the pressure of social opinion, the family history, filial piety, the sense of the ideal or unbroken family, and the economic advantage which a large family, with its pooled resources, possesses over small and comparatively weak and separate units, all play their part. After the death of the older generation, however, the majority of families divide the property and separate. There are few men over fifty with families who continue to live together in the old home after their parents are dead. They prefer to separate and form their own family groups.

³ The Chinese Classics, translated by James Legge, Vol. I, Confucian Analects, IV, xix, p. 171.

In China, a man makes money or makes a reputation for the sake of his family, and in order to reflect honor on his ancestors. He is ambitious for a social reason. Under the Empire, when a man was appointed to office, announcement of the fact was made before his ancestral tablets. He was entitled to ask the proper authorities to confer a title upon his deceased father one rank higher than his own and a title two ranks higher upon his grandfather. This request was regarded as an evidence of filial piety and it was always granted as a matter of course. One of the most important functions of the Imperial government was the conferring of suitable posthumous titles upon worthy ancestors. 4 In recognition of the great services of Sir Robert Hart, who organized the Chinese Maritime Customs and aided China as a faithful public servant for over half a century, his ancestors were ennobled by the Imperial Chinese government for five generations. 5

Ancestor worship may be regarded as a religion with social rather than personal ends. It is collective rather

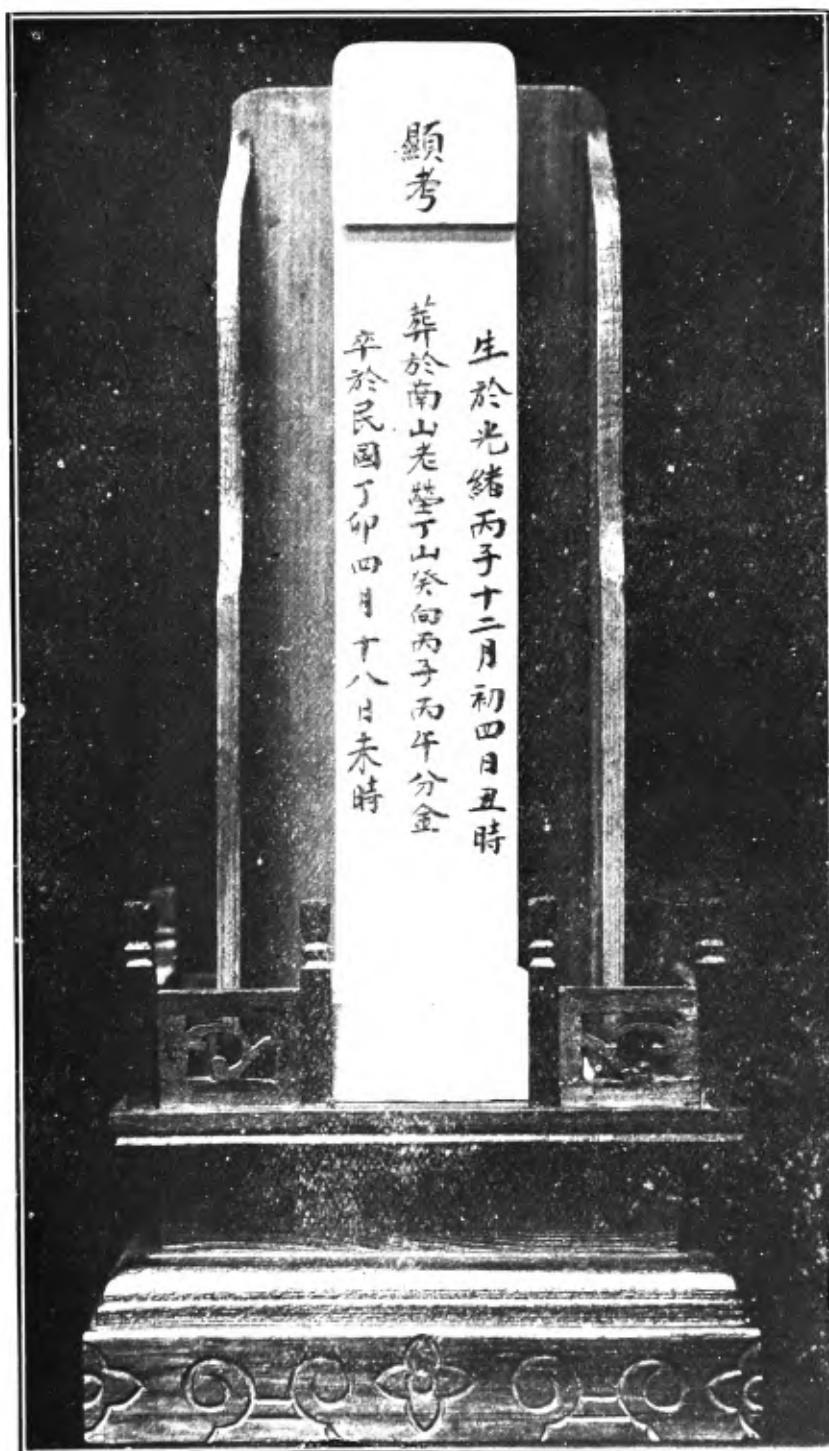
4 W.J. Clennell, The Historical Development of Religions in China, pp. 22-23.

5 Ibid, p. 23.

than individual. It is a group activity and is for the benefit of the group. The males of the family unite in the worship. It is done in the interest of the family rather than the individual. The individual is simply one member of a group. The far-reaching effects of ancestor worship on all of the life of a rural community in South China are thus summarized by Professor Kulp, "Village institutions, - farming, gardening, fruitgrowing, trade, transportation, family organizations and practices, voluntary associations, polity, education, art and religion all function for control of individuals, the regulation of their wishes into conformity to traditional norms of familist continuity for the sake of the fortunes of departed ancestors who are deemed able to control the fortunes of the living, and are very effective." 6 Observation confirms the truth of this statement for North China as well as South China.

The family is responsible for the good conduct of its members. The head of the family is under the head of the city street or the village elders and they in turn are responsible to the magistrate. Such is Chinese local

6 Kulp, Village Life in South China, p. xxvii.



Photograph by Ah Fong.

FACSIMILE OF AN ANCESTRAL TABLET
WITH OUTER PIECE REMOVED.

(See text on page 135).

self-government. When a man commits a crime, his family may become involved. In December, 1928 an ex-soldier robbed one of the partners of a Chefoo shoe shop of several hundred dollars, wounded several people who attempted to subdue him, set fire to the shop and made good his escape. One of the men who was wounded later succumbed from his wounds and the brother of the robber was promptly arrested by the police and sent to the Court of Justice for examination. Family responsibility also extends to the business liabilities of its members. When a man becomes bankrupt, his family must help liquidate his debts. This is nothing but fair since the family shares also in his good fortune and every member of the family receives his share of the family income regardless of whether or not he makes any contribution to it.

The family is central in a man's thinking in China. The best interests of the family is the touchstone by which every proposed course of action must be tested. If it will promote the welfare of the family, it deserves encouragement and support. If it will be prejudicial to the welfare of the family, it must be opposed at any cost. Family loyalty is fundamental and determinative. Professor Kulp reports, "Filial duties to elders and ancestral worship are

the central attitudes of members of a community." 7

This all-absorbing family loyalty has been recognized by Dr. Sun Yat-Sen in his "Three Principles of the People" as a hindrance to patriotism. He advocates that this loyalty be continued but not until it has been definitely subordinated to a higher loyalty to the State. 8

Even when a man marries in China, he does not do it so much for his own benefit as for the benefit of his family, for the family name must be continued, posterity must be raised up in order to carry on the worship of the ancestors of the family, and his mother must be waited on by a daughter-in-law, who will take the place of the daughters who have married and left home. Marriage has great social significance and is primarily a matter of family concern. Chen Shu Shen writes, "In former times, the primary object of marriage was the reproduction of offspring, in other words procreation, which is compatible with the scientific aim of marriage. Play of love between the two sexes was denied and prevented

7 Kulp, Village Life in South China, p. xxiv.

8 See Sun Yat-Sen, The Three Principles of the People (San Min Chu I), pp. 113-114.

from being given the first consideration. Since the object of marriage was so narrow and so long as the object could be attained, the affair was arranged by the parents acting on the information of go-betweens. The peremptory handling of the fate of the young son or daughter prevailed in former times in almost all families. It is regrettable to say that it still prevails in backward and rural families." 9 Since marriage is for the convenience of the family and support is guaranteed from the family purse, it is not necessary to postpone the wedding until the age of self-support has been reached. Early marriage is the rule. Not infrequently it happens that boys away from home at school are called upon to return home by their parents in order to be married. After a few days they return to school but these interruptions often play havoc with the work of the term. Many of the girls who are being given a modern education come from the more enlightened families who are willing to allow their daughters time in which to obtain an education before they are married. Marriage is much more universal in China than

9 China Tomorrow, Vol. I, No. 4, article by Chen Shu Shen on "The Chinese Family System".

in other countries. Practically all young people get married. At the present time, among an increasing number of educated people affected by modern, liberal thought, marriage is a matter of dual consent and the wishes of the son or daughter as well as of the parents are being consulted. Friendship before marriage is encouraged to a certain extent. Parental consent is a matter of vital importance, for, after marriage, the son and the bride live with his parents. The Western type of marriage, which is arranged by the young people most directly concerned, is of very rare occurrence.

The logical result of a great reverence for ancestors is a great regard for posterity, for it is all important that one's spirit be sacrificed to after death. Of the three great blessings prized by the Chinese—wealth, long life, and male posterity—the last named is valued the most highly. Early marriages and large families are the rule, for did not the great sage Mencius affirm that, "There are three things which are unfilial, and to have no posterity is the greatest of them." 10

10 The Chinese Classics, translated by James Legge, Vol. II, The Works of Mencius, IV, i, xxvi, p. 313.

If the first wife has no male progeny, it is essential that the family be held together and perpetuated by the adoption of sons, or by concubinage.

The social solidarity of the Chinese people is founded upon the unity of the clan as well as that of the family. At the present time, the clans in South China are much more powerful than they are in North China. One reason for this condition is found in the different methods of clan organization in the two parts of the country. In South China the clans are strong because they elect the head of the clan each year and they try to select an outstanding leader. In North China the office is hereditary and the head of the clan is, in many cases, not an aggressive leader.

The center of the clan life is the ancestral temple. Family genealogies are deposited here for safe-keeping. Periodically, the male members of the clan gather here to worship their ancestors. The clan temple is the Chinese equivalent of the modern Institutional Church which has grown up in the West with its equipment for various kinds of social, recreational, and religious activities. Clan temples do not have the elaborate equipment that the modern Institutional Church possesses but they provided a meeting

place for the clan and after every religious ceremony which called for general participation, there was a social gathering, often in the form of a feast. One of the principal ceremonies occurred at the New Year season. This and other gatherings which brought the clan together served to unify the group. Many even of the poorest people, such as ricksha pullers for example, go back home at the time of the New Year to take part in the worship of their ancestors. In the country, the young men of the clan go to the ancestral temple and live there for several days prior to the New Year rites. Old ties are strengthened, the clan is unified, and an education is gained in social living. The gregarious instinct which finds expression in fraternal societies in the West is given an outlet.

Nearly every clan is endowed with ancestral land. This land is often held in the name of the ancestor from whom the clan is descended. It is always leased to some member of the clan who cultivates it and pays a yearly rental. This income provides for the sacrifices, the upkeep of the temple, the relief of poor members, help towards the marriage or funeral expenses of those who cannot meet these items unaided, and a grant towards the education of children of poor members.

Strong clan connections confer upon the Chinese all the protection that life insurance affords to the Westerner. The honor of the clan requires that no member be left destitute. Special provision is made for the weak, the sick, the crippled, the aged, and widows, but not for the insane. , |

There is a darker side to the picture, however, for clan feuds in South China have often given rise to lengthy, costly, bloody conflicts. Clan loyalty is so strong that no sacrifice in life or property is deemed too great a price to pay in order to uphold the honor of the clan. This restricted loyalty has helped to prevent the growth of patriotism. Sun Yat-Sen would have all of the families having the same name in a province renew their clan loyalty and spirit. He supposes that there might be four hundred such clans in China and if these four hundred clans could be loyal to their nation as well as to their clan and could unite on a basis of patriotism, China could give the lie to the criticism passed on her by certain foreigners, who say that she is as disunited as "a sheet of loose sand". 11

11 Sun Yat-Sen, The Three Principles of the People (San Min Chu I), pp. 113-118.

Ancestor worship has affected the attitude of the Chinese people towards their children. A son is a sine qua non for the continuance of ancestor worship and hence male children are naturally valued more highly than female children. A passage in the Book of Poetry reads,

"Sons shall be born to him:-

They will be put to sleep on couches;

They will be clothed in robes;

They will have sceptres to play with;

Their cry will be loud.

They will be (hereafter) resplendent with red knee-cover,

The (future) king, the princes of the land.

"Daughters shall be born to him:-

They will be put to sleep on the ground;

They will be clothed with wrappers;

They will have tiles to play with.

It will be theirs neither to do wrong nor to do good.

Only about the spirits and food will they have to think,

And to cause no sorrow to their parents." 12

12 The Chinese Classics, translated by James Legge, Vol. IV, Part II, The She King, or The Book of Poetry, The Minor Odes of the Kingdom, 4th Decade, Ode 5, Stanzas 8-9, pp. 306-307.

This attitude is such an integral part of Chinese thinking that no sense of incongruity,whatsoever,is felt when parents are congratulated,upon the birth of a son,with the phrase,"Great happiness",and upon the birth of a daughter,with the phrase,"Small happiness."

It was to be expected that ancestor worship would affect the size of the population and it has done so to a marked degree. The prime necessity for sons to continue the family name,to offer the sacrifices at the ancestral hall,and to worship at the tomb is a powerful force making for a greatly increased population. To be without sons is to suffer one of the most afflictive misfortunes of life and hence,when there are no sons in the family,concubinage is resorted to in order to remedy the defect. The introduction of concubinage is followed by a whole train of other evils. Unfortunately, too much sentiment is directed towards bringing future generations into being and too little towards providing for their welfare,and,from this standpoint,the great increase in population is a doubtful boon socially. In case a man fails to have a son of his own,he can still adopt one. Adoption is made easy and the legal rights of the adopted son are secured by law. It is impossible for a Westerner,with his

preconceived ideas on the subject, to understand what a matter of prime importance it is to a Chinese to have a son.

Not only has the size of the population been affected by ancestor worship, but its unequal distribution is also due, in large measure, to the same cause. Although the population of China is enormous, there are large tracts of fertile, virgin land in certain outlying territories, such as Manchuria and Mongolia, that are very sparsely settled; while other districts such as the province of Shantung have such a large population in proportion to their area that millions live virtually on the edge of starvation and a crop failure, drought, or flood renders it impossible for the district to raise enough food to feed the people within its borders. This unusual density of population in certain areas results in a chronic problem of great magnitude. The unwillingness to leave home and colonize has been largely due to the desire to avoid going so far from home that it would be impossible to return for the worship of ancestors at the New Year time. In this way, immigration has been reduced and the older parts of the country have become more and more thickly settled. This process has been going on for centuries. It is estimated that 200,000 farm laborers migrate

annually from Shantung to Manchuria but the majority return to their homes for the winter. Of course the winters in Manchuria are more severe than in Shantung but it is the ancestral rites that pull most of the laborers homeward. In spite of the inducements of fertile and cheap agricultural lands, and all that governments and railways can offer, it has been difficult to induce settlers to venture into the new districts. According to reports from Manchuria, the number of those who have migrated from other provinces, chiefly from Hopei (formerly called Chihli) and Shantung, for the last six years is as follows:

1923	385,000
1924	366,000
1925	400,000
1926	525,000
1927	795,000
1928	<u>700,000</u>
Total	3,171,000

The average per year for the six years is 528,500. The 1928 decrease is attributed to the interruption of traffic due to war disturbances. The significance of these figures can be felt when it is remembered that the two provinces of

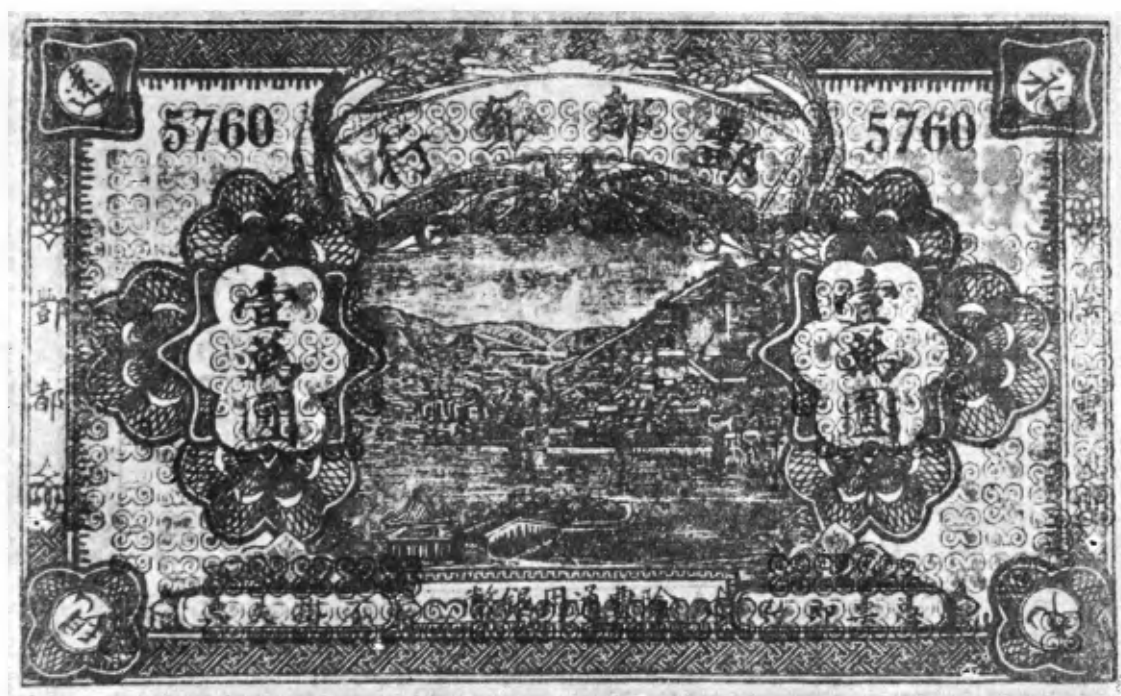
Hopei and Shantung have a combined population of over fifty millions and that during the last six years sections of these provinces have been visited by famine conditions more than once. The wonder is, not that so many have migrated, but that more have not followed their example and sought new homes in sections of Manchuria that were being opened up to new settlers.

Ancestor worship has encouraged art. The finest art products have been created to the glory of ancestors. Portrait painting was stimulated by the demand for pictures of ancestors to be kept in the family and displayed at the time of the New Year sacrifices. Conservative tendencies conventionalized and stereotyped painting to such an extent that it followed early norms very closely and little room was left for originality in treatment. Jade ornaments were carved chiefly in order that they might be placed on the corpse at the time of burial. The principal use for bronzes was as sacrificial vessels to be used in ancestral worship. An examination of the exhibits in the Imperial Museum in Peking discloses the fact that the model of these bronze sacrificial vessels has not been altered since the Chou dynasty (B.C. 1122-255). Many Chinese families preserve with



great care examples of the beautiful handwriting of their ancestors on scrolls which adorn the walls of the home. Music has always played an important part in the ancestral rites performed by the Emperors and by the officials and wealthy people who could afford it. Indeed, ancestor worship has been criticized more than once because of the superstitious belief that the spirits of the dead could be invoked by means of music. Poetry abounds in references to the glories of ancestors and to the observance of the ancestral rites. Practically all forms of Chinese art have been encouraged by ancestor worship.

The effect of the superstitious feng-shui doctrines on Chinese architecture have been almost incredibly great. The spirits must not be disturbed. Every little detail in the location, construction, color, height, etc. of a building is supposed to be either propitious or unpropitious. Many Chinese refuse to live in a building which does not face south. Foreign builders in interior mission stations who have disregarded this prejudice have sometimes been left with unoccupied buildings on their hands. Tall chimneys are considered, in particular, as omens of bad luck. In 1925 when the chimney of the central power plant of the North China



Photograph by Ah Fong.

SPIRIT-WORLD BANKNOTE ISSUED BY THE
"BANK OF HADES".

(See Appendix One and text on pages 158 and 182).

Union Language School was completed in Peking it was found that it rose high above the wall of the compound and overshadowed the narrow street behind. It so happened that Tuan Chi-Jui, Provisional Chief Executive of China, had to pass along this street in his automobile every day on his way to his office. In order to avoid the bad influences emanating from the chimney he had another street cut through, at great expense, to his home so that he would not need to pass the chimney. Sad to relate, his fortunes did not improve and before many months had passed a political and military upheaval cost him his position. Further instances, almost ad infinitum, could be furnished but they are unnecessary as these superstitious beliefs are too well-known to need elaboration.

Industry was affected by the unity of the family which ancestor worship fostered. Home industry, solicitude for the economic welfare of the family, and thrift were encouraged. The handicraft system went naturally with ancestor worship. Articles were made in small shops and much of the work was done by apprentices. Guilds have been very powerful in China for ages. It is sometimes said that they really govern China at the present time. Their influence is certainly

very great. Guilds are held together by ancestor worship. All of the guild gathers to worship the ancestor who founded the organization. For example, the founder of the Builder's Guild in Peking was, 老潘, Lao P'an. Every year the Builder's Guild comes together to pay homage to the memory of this man. The guilds are naturally conservative. All of the skilled laborers in the hand industries are opposed to Communism. They reason that the social revolution proposed by the Communists would simply result in a division of property in which they would lose the shops which they now own in their own right. They are naturally unwilling to part with their property. It is said that the opposition of the guilds had much to do with the collapse of the attempted Red coup d'etat in Peking in 1928. Communism in China faces the opposition of organized, skilled labor. Communist propagandists have more success with unskilled labor but unskilled labor is unorganized and is less inclined to be united than skilled labor. Family trades, similar to those which existed in Europe a few centuries ago, were not uncommon at one time but at present, with the exception of farming, few occupations are hereditary. A man usually takes boys from other families as apprentices and sends his own sons out

to work as apprentices for someone else for it has been found that boys do the best work when not working under their own father. To this day all that a man earns goes into the family purse and none of it is considered his own personally. A man can be arrested and forced by law to divide his earnings with the family group. The story is told of a Peking builder who was very successful and made a good fortune only to have his lazy relatives flock around him and insist that it be divided. He deliberately embarked on a series of apparently unsuccessful ventures in order that he might hoodwink his relatives into thinking that he had lost most of his money. When modern methods of machine production reached China, they had to compete with the handicraft system for the two were mortal enemies and could not combine. In fact, the new industrial process, in its most modern form, succeeds only as it breaks down the old handicraft system. Modern industry has been retarded by ancestor worship and now, in retaliation it is, in many cases, separating members of families from their homes and drawing them into cities, where it has the effect of discouraging ancestor worship, by reason of the social and economic changes which it brings about.

Agriculture has benefitted by the stability and unity of the family which ancestor worship has fostered. There is a strong tendency for a family to stay on the old homestead near the ancestral graves and this has served to forestall migratory proclivities and has helped to make China a great agricultural nation. The skill of Chinese farmers is based upon empirical, rather than theoretical or book, knowledge. They have not tilled the soil for forty centuries without accumulating a vast fund of practical wisdom. In some cases the family has lived on the same bit of ground for generations and much valuable information with reference to the soil has been passed down from father to son.

Ancestor worship has had both a good and a bad effect upon morality. The desire to avoid any action which might dishonor one's ancestors has been a very powerful stimulant to right living. Family pride is found in the West but usually in a lesser degree than in China. The quickest way to make a man mad is to curse his ancestors and no more humiliating experience can be imagined than the victim undergoes in such an instance. A moral safeguard is provided by the social solidarity which makes every member of a family responsible for the defalcation committed by any other member.

For example, a man's family must make good the loss sustained through the failure of his firm or through his dishonesty. When a man does wrong in China, he brings serious consequences upon his family and dishonors his ancestors. On the other hand, ancestor worship, by its insistence upon the need for male posterity, has fostered polygamy and concubinage, with all of the evils allied with these practices. The position of woman has been lowered.

The unified social structure of the Chinese was cemented by their educational system. The teachers of their children and their officials were men proficient in classical learning. The sum and substance of formal education was Confucian ethics and modes of conduct. The first and greatest commandment was similar to the Fifth Commandment given at Mt. Sinai to the Children of Israel. Filial piety issuing in ancestor worship was the center of the educational system. The pupils were taught to act upon what they had learned. The teacher was regarded with great respect as though he were a great ancestor. When he entered the room the students arose and after he had reached the platform, teacher and pupils bowed to one another. After the recitation, the class arose and a bow was exchanged with the teacher before he left the room.

This picturesque and valuable custom continues to be observed at the present time.

The government of China was built upon the family system of control. The old sanctions held the individual to a social course of action. The throne was dependent upon a huge mass of self-supporting and self-governing family units. Clans united the families. There was local self-government by village elders who held the family heads responsible for the good conduct of the members of their families. The Emperor treated the people as his children and did not interfere in their affairs. As long as they sent up the annual taxes in the form of Imperial rice and did not rebel against the throne, the government let them do as they pleased. The government was based on the principles laid down in the Classics and the ruling idea was that the officials, from the Emperor down, must set good examples in right conduct and then the people would imitate them and walk uprightly. Each one must fulfill the duties of his station. The ideas of Confucius on government are summed up in a passage in the *Analects* which reads, "The duke Ching, of Ch'î, asked Confucius about government. Confucius replied, 'There is government when the prince is prince, and the

minister is minister;when the father is father,and the son is son.'" 13 The Emperor,the people's high priest, worshipped his ancestors and all of the officials down through the various ranks to the common people followed his example. Ancestor worship had political significance for the Classics taught that a,忠臣,faithful statesman must first of all be a ,孝子 , filial son. Ancestor worship fostered the paternalistic system of government and made it a success. Many of the Emperors were not slow to recognize in ancestor worship a powerful ally and they used it as a political tool in order to make their own position more secure. It was part and parcel of the old system which taught that Heaven and ancestors were the source of all good things and that the supreme allegiance of all the people was due to the Emperor,or Son of Heaven. Ancestor worship affected even the succession to the throne for an Emperor on his accession must be younger than his predecessor,in order to worship him.

Ancestor worship sometimes affects judicial decisions

13 The Chinese Classics,translated by James Legge,Vol.I, Confucian Analects,XII,xi,1-2.

in China. When a man is found guilty of a serious offense for which the law provides a severe punishment and stands before the judge of the court to be sentenced, the judge asks him about his family. If his father or mother are old, or if one or the other has died recently, and he is the oldest or an only son, he is given a lighter punishment, for nothing must be allowed to interfere with the performance of filial duties by even a criminal.

Ancestor worship indirectly affected China's attitude towards other nations inasmuch as it gave the nation an overweening pride and a strong superiority complex as a result of a backward look that persisted for centuries. Difficulties were thus placed in the way of normal and friendly international relations which have not been removed even yet, as is shown by the regularity with which the China problem presents itself to the diplomats of the world. The fault is by no means confined to one side and the failure of the West to understand Chinese psychology, added to the contempt bred by false ideas of racial superiority, was fully as large, if not indeed, a larger, factor than any other leading up to the difficulties in modern times between China and the Western nations.

CHAPTER IV

UNIVERSALITY OF ANCESTOR WORSHIP

The central place occupied by ancestor worship in the religious life of the Chinese is axiomatic. Ancestor worship has been styled, "the religion of China in the sense that it is universal." ¹ It is the one kind of worship open to all from the highest official to the lowest peasant. Scholars worship Confucius. The middle class of people and old women worship idols but everyone, high or low, rich or poor, worships his ancestors. It is the real, true religion of the Chinese and is their equivalent of the Westerner's worship of God. Professor Soothill says, "The cult of the ancestor, then, is the essential religion of China. Little sense of loss is experienced by the excision of all else. Real atheism in China is the refusal to worship at the ancestral shrine. Nearly everything may be forgone and forgiven, but this never." ² To fail to sacrifice is to be

¹ DuBose, *The Dragon, Image, and Demon*, p. 77.

² Soothill, *The Three Religions of China*, pp. 181-182.

branded as being unfilial. Even the poorest people sacrifice. At the time of the New Year, their sacrifices may be confined to a shorter period but they are regarded as just as efficacious as the sacrifices of the rich which extend over a longer period. Ancestor worship is the essence of the Chinese social system and the prime tenet of Chinese religious faith. It has survived all political and social changes. Dr. Monroe writes, "With all its troubles throughout history, China has been spared religious wars, and-with a few slight exceptions-religious persecutions. Where hostility, opposition, and perhaps persecution do arise, is where a religious cult takes upon itself a political complexion and threatens to disturb the social equilibrium. Such, for example, might be an attack upon ancestor worship, which has no particular connection with any formal religion, but is a fundamental social process or function----. The real religion of China, which permeates the life of all the people and determines the organization of society and the characteristics of social life, is not Confucianism, Buddhism, or Taoism, but ancestor worship. Confucianism may furnish the framework of society, Buddhism or Taoism may furnish the roof, but the cult of the dead is the foundation." 3

3 Monroe, China: a Nation in Evolution, pp. 85-86.



A TYPE OF PAPER MONEY BURN-
ED AT THE GRAVE BY TAOISTS.
(SEE TEXT ON PAGE 164).

We gather from this that ancestor worship is the real, though not the formal, religion of China. Without doubt, this analysis is correct.

The Chinese belief in spirits has been often emphasized. It has been commonly noted by scholars that the religious acts of the Chinese are grouped around the ghosts and spirits. The exorcist is in great demand. There are many kinds of spirits including the spirits of deceased ancestors. The living community is linked with the spiritual community by means of ancestral worship and death by no means breaks the bond between the members of a family. The spirits of the dead rule the living and are able to bless as well as to send evil. They take a lively interest in the welfare of the living. In some mysterious way they keep informed as to mundane affairs. When Buddhism entered China, it added ritual and ceremonies to the worship of departed ancestors and appealed to the imagination of the people. Buddhist priests made capital out of the popular, animistic beliefs. The aid of the priests was sought whether the aim was to assist the spirits in their difficulties or to appease their wrath. The doctrine of the transmigration of the soul was calculated to make the people all the more anxious to help their departed

loved ones whom they imagined to be in need of aid. Taoist priests also gave much of their time to this profitable business of helping or of propitiating the spirits of the departed. Their tenet that the dead were suffering in purgatory and would spitefully injure their descendants unless deliverance was secured for them, tended to increase their power and influence over the living. Many abuses grew up and there were innumerable occasions when it was deemed necessary to seek sacerdotal aid.

The student is naturally led to inquire as to how universal ancestor worship is at the present time. Ancestor worship is the great outstanding feature of present-day Confucianism in China and is the chief popular Confucian worship. Although it is essentially Confucian and constitutes the very essence of that system, ancestor worship is not confined to Confucianists but is practiced as well by Buddhists, Taoists, and adherents of other religions. In fact, it is the most fundamental religious practice found in China. The neglect of one's ancestors is considered to be the highest impiety of which a man is capable and one who is guilty of such an offense is judged to be lacking in one of the essential qualifications of manhood.

He is said to be, *不穀人格*, not up to the standard of a man. Students of comparative religion have often remarked upon the extraordinary fact that, in view of its own principles, Buddhism should tolerate the worship of ancestors, as it does in China. The combination of Buddhism and ancestor worship is a very strange one and yet, as has often been said, if Buddhism when it was introduced into China had not tolerated the worship of ancestors, it would not have made the progress which it did make. Buddhism and Taoism by commending monasticism, obviously made it impossible, for a fraction of the population at least, to have descendants to sacrifice to their spirits after death. In so far as they encouraged monasticism, Buddhism and Taoism opposed ancestor worship and this explains the strenuous efforts of Confucian officials to do away with the Buddhist and Taoist monastic system at various times. There was nothing else in Buddhism and Taoism to interfere with ancestor worship and all Buddhists and Taoists worshipped their ancestors, but the monks and nuns faced the fact that they would not have descendants to sacrifice to them after death.

Orthodox Mohammedans do not carry on ancestor worship. They discard the use of the tablet, the burning of incense,

libations,offerings of food and money,prostrations, prayers,and thanksgivings and they do not observe the spring festival of Ching Ming. This assertion is based upon Mohammedan writings in Chinese and the statement of a Mohammedan priest and has been verified by one who has lived and worked among the Mohammedans of Kansu for many years. There are a few Mohammedans who are so ignorant that they are unable to differentiate between the Chinese terms,

天 ,Heaven and, 上帝 ,Supreme Being or God and among lax Mohammedans of this type ancestor worship may possibly be found. Ancestor worship is regarded as most important by the Chinese. Does not the refusal of the orthodox Mohammedans to worship their ancestors help to explain, in large part,the great friction between the Chinese people (the Han race) and the Mohammedans which has resulted in so many bloody conflicts. ? |

In modern times many eclectic sects have arisen in China. The, 道院 ,Tao Yuan is one of these. It teaches that, 元始天尊 ,Yuan Shih T'ien Tsung is the chief deity ruling over a hierarchy of spirits among whom the chief figures are, 老子 ,Lao Tze,who existed before the heavens were created,and who bears some resemblance to the λ ο γ ο ς

of John 1:1, and ,**呂祖** ,Lü Tsu a chief spirit who occupies a position not unlike that of Gabriel among the angels.

Members of the Tao Yuan claim to be able to communicate with these spirits by means of a pen suspended from the middle of a stick held lightly on the palm of the hand by two men on either side of a sand table or a table on which an ink slab and a piece of paper rest. The,**同善社** ,T'ung Shan She is a Buddhist sect stressing meditation. It also emphasized philanthropy. Its adherents are to be found all over China. In some places in the South it has recently been proscribed by the government because of political plotting and superstitious practices. The**道德會** ,Tao Te Hui is largely Confucian and ethical in character. It lays great stress upon education, character, and mutual help. It opposes superstitions. The,**救世新教** ,Chiu Shih Hsin Chiao is a new sect. It is an attempt on the part of people not scientifically inclined, who feel the need of a sense of stability in this life and of religious consolation in the midst of difficulties, to find the good in all religions and combine them in an eclectic faith. It has an ethical emphasis which is peculiarly Chinese and is mixed with superstitious beliefs in the possibility of communicating with deceased

ancestors and with the illustrious dead. All four of these sects are eclectic and claim to embrace, in a larger unity, the five religions, viz. Confucianism, Taoism, Buddhism, Mohammedanism, and Christianity. It is claimed that there is truth in each of these religions and that each one represented the best religious thinking of the part of the world where it originated. Ancestor worship is admitted as a fundamental practice by all of these sects.

Nothing is more widespread and universal in China than ancestor worship. It is observed by all classes of the Tibetans, Mongolians, Manchurians, and Chinese. The practice knows no geographical limits and in all parts of China the people worship at the tombs of their parents. The only exceptions are the Mohammedans, the few Chinese who have given up the practice, certain aboriginal tribes, and the Christians. Many Christians carry on reverential acts but do not bow before the tablets or burn incense. Even the people who are almost starving to death in the famine districts keep their ancestral tablets. The Miaos, the Yaos, the Lolos, and other aboriginal tribes do not worship their ancestors and, with a keen insight into Chinese psychology and a knowledge of the fundamental interests of the people,

Dr. Sun Yat-Sen urges this as an argument for national unity. He says, "China's aborigines, the Miaos, the Yaos, and other tribes, have long ago broken the blood and food line with their ancestors; unless we can unite the strength of our clans and become a nation that can resist other nations, then some day our ancestors, as those of the Miaos and the Yaos, will have no blood descendants and no offerings." 4 The Hakkas, who compose about one-third of the population of the province of Kwangtung and who are also found in Kwangsi, Fukien, Formosa, and Chekiang, hold ancestor worship as the most cherished part of their religion. 5

Some of the Chinese who leave their home land and settle overseas keep up ancestor worship but there are others who are affected by the atmosphere of the new lands and who decide to give up the practice or else purge it of its superstitious elements. Hwuy-Ung gives us an insight into the mental processes of some of these overseas Chinese.

4 Sun Yat-Sen, The Three Principles of the People (San Min Chu I), p. 117.

5 The Chinese Recorder, Vol. IX, article by R. Lechler on "The Hakka Chinese", pp. 352-359.

He writes, "Ancestral worship was with me-and is with nearly all of the black-haired race who have not left the Flowery Land-a sacred obligation. Thus to argue against it may seem impiety. But I reply to those who will reproach me as a traitor to our ancient doctrines: 'I love life and I love justice. But if I not can preserve both, I would rather yield up life and cling to justice-----'. In ancestral worship, for what cause do we in the eighteen provinces believe that the spirits of the dead hover always around us? For what cause do we believe that they must be flattered with praise, prayer and emblematic offerings? For what cause if their deeds were good, should they be restless and vindictive? Has this reason? I pray you to forgive sin in me if I say that it has not reason, and I not can uphold it. Yet this cult has endured for millenniums and is honored by the followers of K'ung, Lao-tse and Buddha in the Middle Kingdom. There are other spirits neglected by their progeny. We call them Hungry Ghosts doomed to wander uncared for. In fear, we hope to appease them by offering the smell of feasts; we afterwards partaking of their substance. Is this not Wu-ki? (Ignorance) Ai-ya! We have thus fear of spirits that our lives are passed in apprehension. We are told that:

'The approaches of the spirits you cannot surmise-and can you treat them with indifference?' Thus are we foolish and by other nations thought to have small gall (courage). Now time we must cast from us children's trembling fancies, sick dreams of horrible and ridiculous things. It is for this purpose I write;for this purpose I came here to learn the strength of the red-haired men and our own weakness. 'It is hard to take bitter medicine;but it is wise when it restores to health.' If we wish to be strong and avoid dismemberment we must cease to put faith in the existence of spirits,of which there is no fraction of proof.

"I not say that we not honor our ancestors,if honorable, for this sentiment urges their descendants to be worthy of them. In some fine dwellings in the Ying Kingdom (England) and other lands of the West are seen pictures of the owner's ancestors,in which they have great pride. Yet for this pride they have sometimes little reason. For many of these ancestors obtained titles and land by cruelty and oppression or by serving the king's vices. When noble deeds were so rewarded their memory must be justly honored. In such estimation also might our tablets be held;as examples in right-doing,and as warnings against wrong-doing." 6

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6 Hwuy-Ung, A Chinaman's Opinion and of His Own People, pp.92-96.

CHAPTER V

MODERN ATTITUDE

Although, upon investigation, it is impossible to discover any widespread and general decline in ancestor worship, over China generally, as yet, there are forces at work which have caused a considerable number among certain classes of people to give it up, and which give promise of influencing many more in the same way. There are slightly fewer ancestral tablets now than in former times and in some of the newer homes they are disappearing. The worship in clan temples and at the graves appears to be diminishing to a certain extent. Aside from the literati and gentry, ancestor worship flourishes chiefly among the uneducated mass of the common people who make up some eighty to ninety per cent of China's population. Some decline is to be found in what might be termed the top layer of the population. The vast majority of the people over the country, however, continue the rites. More people seem to have given them up in South and Central China than in North China due to the fact that the influence of Western ideas has been greater in the Southern and Central parts of the country. According to Professor

owing |

S.P.Spencer Jr.,of Canton Christian College,ancestor worship is not as prevalent nor as dominating in South China as it once was and this change he ascribes to the influence of industrial expansion,increase in transportation facilities,modernization of education,Communism and Nationalism. Professor C.B.Day,of Hangchow Christian College,reports that in Central China there is a decline in ancestor worship of the more noticeable variety---i.e.at the graves in public. He believes that this may be due in part to the forces of Nationalism and Communism,and as much to the general disruptive forces of Christian missions and international contacts. Other reasons which he assigns for the breakdown of ancestor worship are general increase of ideas flowing through the populace and the transfer of expectation for benefits from the spirit-world to the form of government,viz.,of,by,and for,the people. In North China,ancestor worship seems to be holding its own among the majority of the people. There is a sense of shame on the part of some who carry on the worship at the graves, especially if they are observed,and,in many cases,an attempt is being made to purge the practice of certain objectionable elements.

Monroe places part of the blame for the modern disintegration of the family on the decline of ancestor worship. He says, "If one contemplates the gradual disintegration of the unity of family control-through the prolongation of student life, through isolation of students in school compounds, through sending students abroad, through delayed marriage, through seeking distant scenes of livelihood, through new marriage customs, through decline of ancestor worship, through complete rejection or novel interpretation of ancient beliefs and practices, through new intellectual, political and social ideas-one begins to realize that the disintegration of the family unit is the most significant change now going on in modern China." 1 The reverse, that the breakdown of the family is causing a corresponding diminution in ancestor worship, is equally true. Economic pressure is a mighty factor in breaking up large family groups. The members of the group are forced to seek employment and often this cannot be obtained near at hand. Ancestor worship is suited to the quiet, pastoral type of family life where a large group of people live together.

1 Monroe, China: a Nation in Evolution, p. 308.

The agricultural basis of China's civilization and the great difficulty of communication have helped to make the family system dominant in China. The improvement of communications, the introduction of the industrial system of the West and the individual emphasis of modern education are weakening the family system and hence are affecting ancestor worship adversely. These changes are an inevitable part of the modernization of China.

Ancestor worship would be discontinued in many cases were it not for social pressure. All men are more or less responsive to social pressure but the Chinese, because of their environment, respond to it to an unusual degree. Although a man may wish to abandon the rites, yet he is only one member of the family and, if the family wishes to keep them up, he must conform to their wishes. He cannot afford to be anti-social, especially in view of the control exercised by the family over his income. Moreover he is not oblivious to the fact that the clan temple is a social center and that ancestor worship acts as a bond to unite the group so that the rites are of value from a social point of view. If the family contains older people, they are in control and see to it that the rites are continued. If there are no older people

about, the younger generation is inclined to discontinue the rites. There is no general movement to discard ancestor worship and there is not much criticism of it in print. There is some discussion but the issue is so easily dismissed, once it is examined, that there is little interest in it. It is regarded as a personal or social matter to be settled according to individual tastes. A non-Christian scholar who had given up ancestor worship described the process in his case as an evolution. He had unconsciously dropped the practice as something unnecessary and superfluous. He felt no conscious need for its continuance and had simply discarded it as a matter of course without giving it a thought. e/

Ancestor worship could not fail to be affected by the criticism of the past on the part of many young thinkers of modern China. With the Revolution in 1911, there came a change of thought and attitude. Many favored smaller family groups. They attacked the feudalism of the family system and revolted against the control of the living by the dead. They did not directly attack ancestor worship but it was included in their criticisms of the past. They said that old institutions had outworn their usefulness and must be changed. Confucius

was flayed for his imperialism. The very center of his system was the loyalty due to the Emperor as the Son of Heaven and the filial submission due to the father as the head of the family. The family system was linked with the old imperialistic system of government. When the government was changed to a republic, the demand was that the family also be made less autocratic. The thought movement following the Great War when all things were examined and re-evaluated issued in the Renaissance (1918-1923). Since 1924, the military phase of the Revolution has occupied the attention of China. At the present time, the tide is in full swing away from the old imperial ideas.

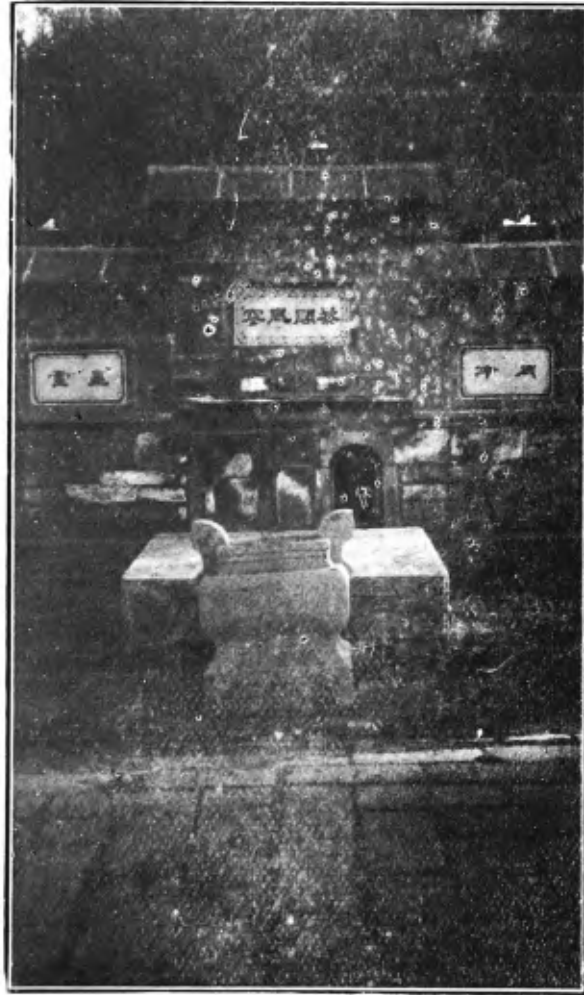
The modern, progressive type of family is looking forward instead of backward. The parents are more interested in the coming generation than in the one that has passed on. The education of their children absorbs their thought rather than the worship of their ancestors. In former times, education at the village school was not a difficult matter for it was very inexpensive but modern education is so expensive that it often severely taxes the resources of the family. The money formerly spent on the worship of ancestors is now being used for education by some modern families.

The modern student class has experienced a greater change of attitude towards the past than any other class of the Chinese people and hence we find that the chief decline in ancestor worship is to be found in educated circles. The prevailing attitude is largely one of indifference but, in one form or another, many carry on the worship as a tradition. Speaking generally, ancestor worship is declining among students. They constitute only a small fraction of the total population but, in a land where the educated man has always been highly respected, they are influential out of all proportion to their numerical strength and from their ranks are recruited the nation's teachers. Not a few students have rejected ancestor worship as a relic of the past not worth preserving.

A typical example is Professor Hu Shih, who, at an early age, made a brilliant record at Columbia University, where he secured his Doctor's degree in Philosophy. He is the most popular and best known of the Western returned students now prominent in Chinese educational circles and is the leader in the Cultural Renaissance or Literary Revolution which is of no less significance to the Chinese people and to the world at large than the more spectacular political

changes which have been taking place during the past quarter of a century. We may take Dr. Hu Shih's views to be representative of those of a large section of the educated class and they are widely influential. In his discourse on the Doctrine of Immortality (不朽) (indestructibility) he plainly says that he does not believe in the immortality of the soul. He denies the existence of the soul apart from the body in these words, "The soul is not something formless, independent and yet existing; it is but the sum-total of our nervous activities; all ~~the~~ activities of the soul are the functional activities of the brain." He believes in another kind of immortality-the immortality of established virtue, merit and truth which are called in Chinese "the three indestructibles" (三不朽). A man's character, his work and his writing have the value of external existence. Yet he is not satisfied with this and so he adds a third kind-the immortality of society which he looks upon as his religion. Each individual is a little self and society is the big self. "All the little selves may die out, but the big self is immortal." 2

2 Chinese Recorder, July, 1928, article by Hunter Yen on "Some Modern Chinese Scholars and Religion," pp. 415-416.



Photograph by the Author.

TUMULUS CONTAINING TWO GRAVES

The sealed opening at the left indicates that the wife is living while the opening at the right indicates that the husband is dead. At the Lantern Festival, on the fifteenth of the first month, a lantern is placed in the opening. (See text on page 153).

It is self-evident that views like this leave no room for ancestor worship, except possibly as a memorial service continued simply in order to satisfy the demands of tradition. In the case of Dr. Hu Shih's family, the practice has been discontinued for over ten years.

Dr. Hu Shih attributes the breakdown in ancestor worship, which is noted in certain quarters, to a combination of two factors, viz., modern education and industrialized city life. Modern education changes one's outlook on life. Industrialized city life makes the clan life, of which ancestor worship was a social and religious expression, impossible and it is very easy to forget the old practices in the city. The continuance by certain overseas Chinese of ancestor worship, even when they live in modern cities, can be accounted for by the fact that they are conservative and give their children the old Chinese classical education instead of modern education. They have not yet come under the influence of modern education.

Modern education, especially when it is obtained abroad, produces great changes in the mental attitudes of Chinese students towards the history, culture, and customs of their country. Contact with modern society in other lands invariably

reacts unfavorably upon ancestor worship. This process is mentioned by Monroe. He says, "In truth, the ancient culture is disintegrating because of the decay of the ancient faith. The cult of the dead, with its attendant rites and its fundamental beliefs, cannot stand in the light of modern scientific knowledge and attitude of mind. Modern education, contact with modern society in other lands, inevitably conduces to its decay. The masses of the Chinese people are not mistaken in their irrational, formless fear of 'foreignism'; for these influences from the outside, embodied in their own leaders, their own student class, are bringing about this inevitable result. As they vaguely feel this crumbling of social foundations, the break-up of the great deep of the Chinese past, they can but become terrified-and hostile to all manifestations of the forces bringing destruction." ³ There cannot help but be a reaction on the part of these students from the old attitude of blind, submissive, tacit veneration of the Classics. A typical example of this reaction reads,

"It must be admitted that there is much in our Classics

³ Monroe, *China; a Nation in Evolution*, p. 87.

that is repetitive, trite and a mixture of superstition and demonology. The chief substance in them is the aim at conversion by good example and gentle persuasion. The moral precepts in them will remain, but much of the rest will be deleted. This I say with a certain regret; even with a half consciousness of sacrilege. Still in the interest of my native land I must brave the opprobrium that will inevitably be attached to me. You, Tseng-Ching, I hope will make allowance for this desertion of the faith of my former life. The Classics, however, will never die. Such precious writings will always be studied by our learned men. It will not be necessary nor possible to adopt the method of the Emperor Ts'in who consigned all the books to the flames and burnt alive 400 of the scholars.

"We have in China through the doctrines of Confucius, Mencius and the Sages, which we assimilated when we first learnt to pencil characters, molded our natures into a standardized type of subjection to the law, to our ancestors, to old age, to our fathers, to our family, or to our clan. Thereby we have lost in individuality, initiative, enterprise and ambition. Our lives have been so regulated by these influences that new ideas, inventions and discoveries were

included in the 'extraordinary things' which we were warned against. We believed we had attained the ideal life and could go no further. So our civilization, in some respects superior to any other, if the aggregate happiness is its test, became crystallized and enduring." 4

After the removal of ancient sanctions there was a swing in the direction of extreme individualism. The impelling motive which made men ambitious in former times was the desire to make a name for the family. As a result of the new emphasis on the importance of the individual, there are an increasing number of those whose impelling motive is the desire to make a name for themselves. When the old foundations are crumbling, it is but natural to find a lack of reverence for the past and for age, and a corresponding emphasis upon the newest and latest. The new ideas that are coming in are producing great changes. This is especially evident in the realm of manners. The old courtesies that were in many cases too stiff, formal, and hollow are being discarded all too quickly and often nothing is being found to take their place. This is but a superficial symptom of

4 Hwuy-Ung, A Chinaman's Opinion of Us and of His Own People, p.249.

far deeper and more significant changes in attitude. This change in manners is blamed on Christianity, the foreign religion, which is touching so many young lives in mission schools and supplying them with modern views; but it is, in reality, simply an inevitable consequence of the modernization of China which is now taking place. In so far as the Christian movement has destroyed confidence in the old before building up confidence in the new, it has been culpable. The old social sanctions will have to be supplanted by new individual sanctions in the new era and it has been the task of the Christian movement to supply these new individual sanctions. The future will tell how successful this effort has been. After being completely dominated and overshadowed by the older generation, including their elders and their teachers, for centuries, Chinese students have suddenly been given a new viewpoint and larger liberty. They have swung to the other extreme and have been guilty of great excesses. There has been a tremendous reaction against the old idea of submission to the will of the family. An example of this type of reaction is given by Dr. Hawks Pott, "Sometimes we see instances of individualism run mad, and filial piety, the greatest virtues in China, is thrown to the

winds-the individual claiming the right to be his own master without regard to the wishes of any one. The following example of the new spirit is worth quoting. A father wrote to his son at school,admonishing him for some misconduct. The son replied to the following effect: 'You are an individual and so am I. As two individuals our opinions are worthy of equal consideration,and I see no reason why I should forego my own opinion in favor of yours.'" 5 Another case was that of a girl who advertised in a Tientsin newspaper that she had severed connections with her family and would reserve the right to choose her own school,select her own husband,and so on. Some of the modern students have rejected the idea that discipline is a necessary part of school administration and have attempted to dictate to the school officials,faculties,and governing boards. Student strikes have become more and more common and students in some cases have demanded the right to fix fees,select text-books,dismiss teachers,arrange curriculums, and run schools generally. While the students are keenly anxious to help their country and are politically minded

5 Hawks Pott,The Emergency in China,p.193.

to a superlative degree, their movements often lead to excesses that make efficient schools an impossibility. The student movement is at once the hope and the despair of China. The students are the leaders in trying to awaken the people to the responsibilities of an electorate in a democracy and in promoting popular education and other splendid reforms. Perhaps their mistakes are due to an excess of youthful zeal. When this generation of students become the heads of families and the older generations pass away we may expect a marked decline in ancestor worship, in their class in society-unless, in the meantime, they settle down to the continuance of the old traditions out of respect for the past.

One of the greatest influences affecting students and causing them to adopt a different attitude towards ancestor worship has been the study of science. This study has revolutionized their world view and has done much to rid them of superstition. It has given to them the critical, scientific attitude of mind which is unwilling to accept as true and of value any custom or belief, however ancient and time-honored it may be, until it has been carefully examined before the bar of reason. A skeptical, rationalistic

agnosticism leaves no room for a belief in spirits. If, since there are no spirits, the dead do not receive any benefit and men have no one to fear in case the rites are neglected, why should these timeworn and meaningless customs be perpetuated? The gradual spread of scientific knowledge is also affecting the masses to a certain extent. For example, reliance upon the doctrines of feng-shui has been gravely shaken by the mines which have been dug and the railroads which have been built without resulting in the serious consequences which had been predicted. The belief in the millions of evil spirits ready to work havoc once they are disturbed or restraints are removed is decaying in the face of the advance of scientific knowledge.

Another class of people that is giving up ancestor worship is the materialistic class. Materialism is not new to China but materialistic philosophy from the West is beginning to cause some of the Chinese people to deny the existence of spirits. It is said, "Present-day Chinese maintain an unfavorable attitude towards Ancestor Worship. The introduction of Occidental material philosophy has, to a great extent, loosened the hold of tradition and customs upon the minds of people. As a result reverence for ancestors

is giving way to dollaritis or dollarocracy. Ancestor Worship had its origins in the bequest of property from ancestors and the notion that ancestors would, as deities or spirits, afford protection to their offspring or favor them with the blessings of prosperity and plenty. But present-day Chinese begin to doubt the existence of the soul or spirit; they have become indifferent as to what should be done with the deceased, even if this means that they themselves should be no more. The young materialists believe that death ends everything; the deceased have entirely severed their relationships with their survivors; and it is an extravagance to worship the no more sensible beings who most probably do not have any actual existence. Again, many people do not inherit property or real estate from their ancestors, and so it is absolutely unnecessary to offer them sacrifices which they cannot possibly enjoy or appreciate. Although it may be a mere ceremony to remember their part in rearing and raising children, the latter can repay their service with filial piety and obedience in their life time better than after their death." 6

6 Chinese Recorder, April, 1928, "Present-Day Attitude Towards 'Ancestor Worship', a Symposium," Chiang Liu, p. 231.

A growing tendency to neglect ancestor worship is noticeable among those who have migrated from their old homes and broken with the home ties. The graves of their ancestors are, in most cases, too far distant to be regularly visited. Formerly, there was more of the general sacrifice performed out on the hill tops or at the crossroads for the sake of the ancestors buried far away than there is to-day. Due to civil war and economic causes, there has been an increase in migration of late years. Improved communications have also stimulated the movement. Railroads and motor roads have shortened journeys and rendered them less tedious and expensive than they were when canal boats, mule litters, camel trains, wheelbarrows, horses, and donkeys afforded the only means of transportation available. Of the number who migrate, not all give up ancestor worship, for some take their tablets with them and continue the worship in their new home while some return, after a time, to their old homes and resume the practice there but it must be admitted that a considerable number of those who migrate fail to keep up the worship. Industrial expansion has caused a decline in ancestor worship by separating families and bringing people by the thousands into the cities to work in the factories.

In the future, this movement is certain to increase as the industrialization of China proceeds.

Communism is the deadly enemy of ancestor worship and has tried to overthrow it wherever it has gained a foothold. The opposition of ancestor worship is one reason why it is unlikely that China, as a whole, will ever be Communistic. Dr. Monroe has written what has been characterized as one of the sanest and fairest discussions of the Russian influence on the Nationalist movement in China and in the course of his presentation of this subject, he states, "Aside from the practical and powerful impetus which the Russians have given to China in the direction of organization, training of leadership, and methods of propaganda, time will probably reveal that their greatest influence is in the encouragement of forces destructive of the old conservatism, of the old family system, of the worship of ancestors, of the rule of the village elders, of the coupling of responsibility and wealth; in effect, the displacement of the old communism of China for the new Russian Communist rule of the self-elected few; which, so far as the masses are concerned, means a pernicious, offensive, and predatory individualism." 7

7 Monroe, China: a Nation in Evolution, p. 421.

The attitude of the Nationalist movement towards ancestor worship is of vital interest. Dr. Sun Yat-Sen was the Father of the Revolution and is now the national hero. "The Three Principles of the People" was his tocsin and, in it, he bequeathed to his compatriots an excellent manual for propaganda purposes. In this book it is said, "This custom of tracing the ancestral line back to its earliest sources is thousands of years old and firmly rooted in Chinese social life. Foreigners think the custom a useless one, but this idea of 'reverencing ancestors and being kind to the clan' has been imbedded for millenniums in the Chinese mind. So a Chinese ignored the downfall of his country; he did not care who his emperor was, and all he had to do was to pay his grain tax. But if anything was said about the possible extinction of his clan, he would be in terror lest the ancestral continuity of blood and food be broken, and he would give his life to resist that." 8

The Nationalist government officially, has neither encouraged nor discouraged ancestor worship, over the country

8 Sun Yat-Sen, The Three Principles of the People (San Min Chu I), p. 116.

generally. It has left it alone. The Manchu Emperors encouraged it for it upheld the Imperial power but it bears no such relation to the new regime. In a movement as large as that of the Nationalist movement it is useless to expect uniformity and so, while some of the leaders favor the promotion of ancestor worship, and many scholars are now advocating it in the newspapers as the best thing for China, others of the political innovators tend to give up the religious ideas and customs of the family and of their fathers. Ancestor worship and the old family system have, to a certain extent, opposed reforms and progress and for this reason some of the young leaders of the Nationalists who are eager for the proposed changes have denounced ancestor worship. Others are striving to purge it of its superstitious elements.

In many of the provinces, the provincial authorities have recently ordered the temples that formerly held idols to be changed into public gardens and memorial libraries to Sun Yat-Sen but ancestral temples are exempted from this drastic order. According to newspaper reports from Canton, the selling and burning of incense, candles and paper money for idol worship and for the dead was to be strictly



Photograph by Ah Fong.

SPIRIT-WORLD BANKNOTE ISSUED BY THE
"BANK OF HADES AND HEAVEN".

(See Appendix One and text on pages 158, 159 and 182).

prohibited in Kwangsi province after January 1, 1929, in accordance with a decision reached by the Kwangsi Provincial Government. This extreme action seems to have been confined to one province. An official in Peking recently announced that the government looks with extreme disfavor on the burning of paper effigies at funerals and other extravagances of this kind. This attitude is assumed on the grounds of economy and the necessity for the overthrow of superstition. In general, the attitude of certain young leaders among the Nationalists has caused a decline in ancestor worship. It is, as yet, too early to determine whether this decline will result in a permanent change or only a temporary falling away.

Indicative of the changed attitude towards the resting places of the deceased, was the action of Northern soldiers in breaking into and robbing the tombs of the late Empress Dowager Tz'u Hsi and the Emperor Kien Lung during the summer of 1928. The first two attempts to open the tombs failed and on the third attempt dynamite was resorted to and the tombs were dismantled. Among the jewels which were removed were two jade melons, which ranked among the most precious stones of the world. They were greatly prized by the Empress

Dowager during her lifetime and were buried in her coffin at her request. It was estimated that one million dollars was obtained by the sale of part of the spoils in Peking. This action is entirely foreign to Chinese religious tenets of respect for the dead and although an attempt may be made to lay the blame upon the Revolution, which swept away so many of the old and time-honored ideals of the past, yet this attempt cannot be successful for these were Northern soldiers—supposedly unaffected by the revolutionary ideas. Twenty or thirty years ago no Chinese soldier could have been found anywhere to attempt to thus ruthlessly commit the sacrilege of disturbing either the Imperial Rest or even that of the lowest among his own countrymen but over sixty individuals took part in this robbery of the Imperial Tombs.

There are not wanting those who think that ancestor worship will be abandoned in China. Monroe confidently predicts, "The abolition of the worship of Heaven together with the abandonment of the study of the Confucian texts in the schools, and the desertion of Confucianism as practically an established or at least recognized state religion—all on the occasion of the establishment of the Republic—constitute the outward symbol of the abandonment of ancestor worship.

Economic and intellectual forces will work more quietly and more effectively than political forces in bringing about this fundamental change. But just as new political and cultural ideas permeate slowly from above, so do these primitive ideas of ancestor worship fade slowly from the depths of the experience of the lowly." 9 Others have felt that, as China takes her place among the nations, ancestor worship will gradually pass away just as it is now doing in Japan. 10 There is support for this view in the fact that other nations and races have discarded ancestor worship in the course of their evolution.

If the study of modern science with its conception of nature should deal a death blow to ancestor worship, what would the Chinese then hold to? Would they go over to Naturalism and hold only to Physical Force and one impersonal Energy? These are questions which the future alone can answer. Suffice it to say that such a change would involve a radical revolution in the thinking of one of the oldest

9 Monroe, China: a Nation in Evolution, pp. 95-96.

10 See Records-China Centenary Missionary Conference, Report of the Committee on Ancestor Worship.

and most conservative nations in the world.

It is of interest to note that, should ancestor worship pass, a change might be brought about in social customs. For instance, young people might marry later than they do at present. Under the paternalistic system and especially in the case of rich men, it has been the custom to have sons marry early because of the desire for a large number of descendants-particularly of boys, since only males can offer the ancestral sacrifices and some of them may die or be killed. If ancestor worship passes, boys may be allowed to marry at an older age and even perhaps to choose their own wives. They might thus be allowed to obtain a better education before they marry than is now possible, as many schools have regulations that discourage the marriage of their students. Girls also would have a better opportunity to obtain an education since their marriage would not take place at such an early age. With the necessity removed for bringing into the world a large number of male descendants and the age of marriage raised, smaller families might result.

Some observers expect ancestor worship to continue in a somewhat modified form. In a letter, Dr. Frank Rawlinson, editor of the Chinese Recorder, states, "I doubt that it will

pass in any absolute sense. It will, however, gradually emphasize more the commemorative aspect, which is part of its past, and eliminate the superstitious ideas connected therewith." In view of the extreme conservatism which is such a strong racial characteristic of the Chinese and which would preclude the abandonment of ancestor worship on the part of the majority, this seems to be the most probable course of development. Science is helping to rid ancestor worship of superstition by making possible the large portrait which is increasingly being substituted for the ancestral tablet. This manifestly has no effect, however, on isolated, interior districts where modern photography is unknown. A mid-way stage in the transition from tablet to picture is the custom of dressing the picture up and giving it an appearance of animation by throwing a coat or some other garment over it. As a rule, the process by which the picture is made is fairly well understood. It lacks the mystery connected with the inscription and dedication of the tablet by breathing upon it and invoking the spirit of the deceased to dwell within it. Hence the picture, unlike the tablet, is usually not regarded as the seat of the spirit. In this way science is combating superstition.

The question has been raised as to whether ancestor worship might not be transformed into patriotism. In Japan, Confucianism is organized around loyalty to the Emperor rather than loyalty to parents and ancestors. The paternalistic system of government which existed under the Empire was fostered by ancestor worship, its indispensable ally. Now that the Chinese Republic has been born and democracy is the prevailing form of government, could not the powerful forces behind ancestral worship be enlisted in the aid of patriotism and thus be made to strengthen the foundations of the new government just as ancestor worship strengthened the old government? Should it not be possible, while giving up some of the old forms, to retain the old reverence of the past, to increase the interest of Young China in China's history and to encourage pride therein? Could not the loyalty of the people be organized around the Republic or the person of its popular hero, Sun Yat-Sen? As a matter of fact, strenuous efforts are now being made by the Nationalist government to awaken a sense of patriotism and a nationalistic spirit in the hearts of the people. Popular slogans, mass meetings, posters, new patriotic text-books, newspaper and magazine articles, and the promotion of commercial aviation

are some of the twentieth-century methods that are being used to arouse the people to take more interest and pride in the government of their country.

At the present time, there is taking place in China the apotheosis of Sun Yat-Sen. Every Monday morning throughout the Republic, a Memorial Service is held in his honor which includes a three minute period of meditation, the reading of his will, sometimes words of exhortation from officials of the government and, in conclusion, three bows by all present before his picture. A very expensive and elaborate National Tomb for Sun Yat-Sen has been prepared on Purple Mountain near Nanking, the national Capital. It is probable that this will become a national shrine. Of course this reverence for a great man is being exploited in order to serve the ends of a political party (the Kuomintang or Nationalists) but the fact remains that Dr. Sun is being looked upon as the Father of the Revolution and it is possible that he may come to be looked upon by many as the Great Ancestor. This possibility is not as fanciful as it might, upon first thought, seem. Intelligent people may continue to regard him, just as English people regard King George, as a symbol of national unity in no way supernatural. The low degree of

intelligence found among the masses in China, makes it possible for their attitude to have a real religious basis. On the strength of the old Buddhist teachings, Dr. Sun might be regarded as an embodiment of the spirit of the past. It cannot be predicted whether or not this process will continue and become of enduring permanence. The answer is wrapped up in the fate of the Nationalist party. Dr. Sun is already regarded by the Chinese in much the same light as George Washington was by succeeding generations of Americans. It was over two thousand years after Confucius died before the Manchu Emperors, in a vain attempt to re-energize Confucianism, raised Confucius to the rank of a god. In the twentieth century, the process has been speeded up and by modern methods it is being accomplished in a few months. It would be a curious coincidence if Sun Yat-Sen come to be regarded as the Great Ancestor, the outstanding modern peak flanked by a range of the heroes of antiquity, and should thus make up by his personal popularity for the lack of patriotism or loyalty to the Republic which he deplored so strongly in "The Three Principles of the People." 11

11 Sun Yat-Sen, The Three Principles of the People (San Min Chu I), pp. 126-128.

Rash indeed would be the prophet who would venture to predict that ancestor worship will soon pass away for practices that have been traditional for centuries, as a rule, do not disappear overnight. Ancestor worship is really but a part of the superstructure that has been erected on the foundation of filial devotion and it is a corruption of that basic tenet. There is no doubt that the forces making for a diminution in ancestor worship and tending to undermine it are increasing in force and may be expected to gain momentum in geometric ratio in the future. For instance, modern education has not yet affected the masses of the people but the time when it will do so is approaching. Speaking generally of the country as a whole, at the present time, ancestor worship is not actually declining very much and, indeed, it may be said to be holding its own, but when all of the forces working against it begin to bring stronger pressure to bear, there is sure to be considerable decline.

PART TWO

SOME RELIGIOUS ASPECTS OF ANCESTOR WORSHIP IN CHINA

CHAPTER VI

FILIAL PIETY

In order to properly understand ancestor worship it is necessary to remember that it is an expression of filial piety. Filial piety results in reverence to parents while living, in giving them a proper burial when they die, and in showing due respect during the duration of their ancestral life. In filial piety is to be found a clue to the meaning, significance, indeed the very raison d'etre of ancestral rites. It provided the setting for ancestor worship. Examining merely the rites without inquiring into their setting is like centering attention on a few ugly or broken buttons on a handsome coat instead of noticing the coat. The ceremonies, rites, and external forms of ancestor worship may appear to be idolatrous but it must not be forgotten that they have an excellent setting-namely, the practice of filial piety-which has much to commend it. It was the doctrine of filial piety which resulted in the strengthening and rationalization of the practice of ancestor worship and which supplied the motive force required to continue this external form which

it assumed. The prime importance of filial piety in Chinese ethics is well-known and from the beginning it has constituted the very center or core of the Confucian system. Confucius set out to reform society and the state by the practice of filial piety and the power of a good example. His strong moral sense has made an appeal to successive ages and has been widely recognized by scholars all over the world. Confucius regarded filial piety as "the fundamental duty of living men." It ranks first among all virtues in China. All generous conduct flows from filial and fraternal sentiments. In the Analects, the disciple Yu Tze says, "Filial piety and fraternal submission, are they not the root of all benevolent actions?"¹ According to Confucian teaching, man's chief end is to practice filial piety. Confucius considered the worship of ancestors to be a part of filial piety.

It is not hard to imagine why filial piety is stressed so strongly, for in China it is the family that counts far more than the individual and society is socially minded. The continuity of the family is very real and precious to the

¹ The Chinese Classics, translated by James Legge, Vol. I, Confucian Analects, I, ii, 2, p. 139.

Chinese. Monroe writes, "In the West, we are familiar with the idea of the continuity of social organization, upon which our institutional life is based, and with the idea of continuity of individual life, upon which our religious beliefs are based. In China neither the individual nor society possesses this continuity, as such; or possesses it only as a corollary to that which is fundamental; namely, the continuity of the family. With the Chinese the family consists of all deceased members of the given unit, all the present members, all prospective members." 2

Proverbs preserve the crystallized common sense of the common people and are a fair index to their attitudes, feelings, and beliefs. A common Chinese proverb leaves no doubt as to the importance attached in the popular mind to filial piety. It runs, 世間好事忠和孝
天下良謀讀與耕, "No virtues equal loyalty and filial piety; no employments equal those of learning and agriculture." The position of filial piety among the virtues is indicated thus: 萬善孝為先, "Of a myriad virtues, filial piety is the first." The results of

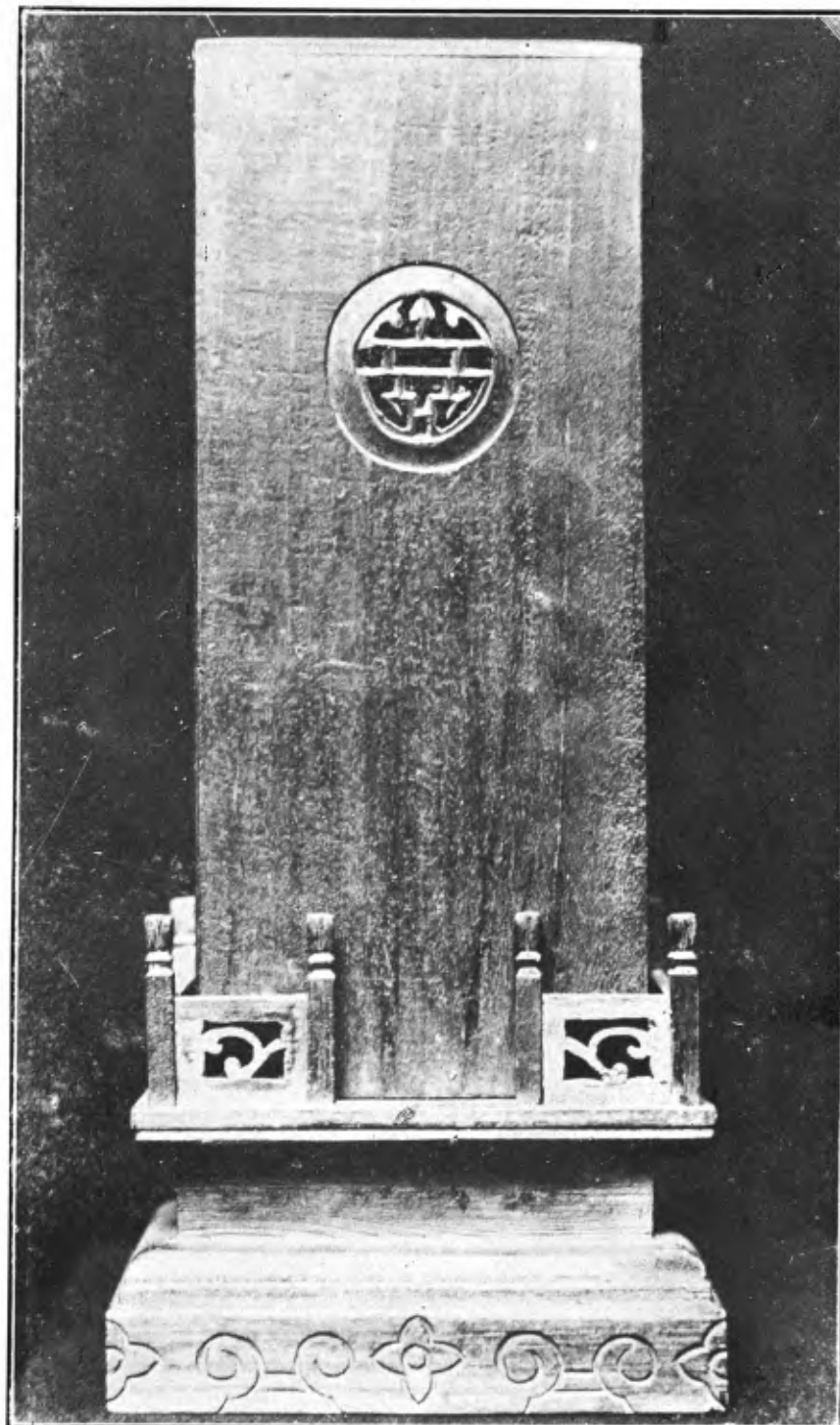
2 Monroe, *China: a Nation in Evolution*, p. 87.

filial conduct are set forth in these proverbs: 孝心

感動天和地,"Filial piety moves heaven and earth," 子孝父心寬,"A filial son is the joy of his father," 一子不孝有子皆滅 ,
 "One unfilial son involves others in ruin." 3

The "Classic of Filial Piety" sets forth in great detail the doctrine of filial devotion with all of its many implications. By means of explicit precepts and illustrious examples, it sets forth filial piety as the supreme duty of man. In Chapter I it is said that filial piety is the root of all virtue and the stem of all moral teaching. It is also said, "Our bodies-to every hair and bit of skin-are received by us from our parents, and we must not presume to injure or wound them;-this is the beginning of filial piety.---When we have established our character by the practice of the (filial) course, so as to make our name famous in future ages, and thereby glorify our parents;-this is the end of filial piety. It commences with the service of parents; it proceeds to the service of the ruler; it is completed in the establishment

3 These proverbs are taken from Scarborough-Allan, Chinese Proverbs, p. 242.



Photograph by Ah Fong.

AN ANCESTRAL TABLET IS KEPT IN A
WOODEN CASE WHEN NOT IN USE.

(See text on page 134).

of the character." 4 One deduction from this teaching is that it is a great offense to cut off one's finger for it will be missing in the next world and the loss will disfigure the body which the offender has received from his parents. In the same way, decapitation is regarded as a great disgrace for it results in a headless body in the future world.⁵

In the Hsiao King it is reported, "The disciple Zang said, 'I venture to ask whether in the virtue of the sages there was not something greater than filial piety.' The Master replied, 'Of all (creatures with their different) natures produced by Heaven and Earth, man is the noblest. Of all the actions of man there is none greater than filial piety.'" 6 The importance of filial piety is etched in bold relief by the singular manner in which Confucius singled out a man who had been guilty of unfilial conduct and stigmatized him as

4 The Sacred Books of the East, The Texts of Confucianism, translated by James Legge, Part I, The Hsiao King, Ch. I, pp. 466-467.

5 The Chinese Classics, translated by James Legge, Vol. I, Confucian Analects, Footnote on VIII, iii, pp. 208-209.

6 The Sacred Books of the East, The Texts of Confucianism, translated by James Legge, Part I, The Hsiao King, Ch. IX, p. 476.

the incarnation of utter worthlessness. "Yüan Zang was squatting on his heels and waited the approach of the Master, who said to him, 'In youth, not humble as befits a junior; in manhood doing nothing worthy of being handed down; and living to an old age:-this is to be a pest.' With this he hit him on the shank with his staff." 7 Yüan Zang was an old scapegrace who in his youth was lacking in filial piety and in manhood did nothing worthy of being handed down to posterity and yet lived on to an old age. He was a follower of the heresies of Lao-tze. Yüan Zang was all that a good Confucianist should not be!

The primitive character for filial piety is , 孝 , hsiao. Its composition is very suggestive. It is formed by placing the phonetic, 老 , lao, old, which stands for parents, over the radical , 子 , tzu, son. The idea is perfectly plain that the son should render unto his parents and elders that devotion and reverence which is their due. 8

The service which a filial son should render to his

7 The Chinese Classics, translated by James Legge, Vol. I, Confucian Analects, XIV, xlv, pp. 292-293.

8 Wilder and Ingram, Analysis of Chinese Characters, p. 137.

parents is set forth in detail as follows,"The Master said, 'The service which a filial son does to his parents is as follows:- In his general conduct to them,he manifests the utmost reverence;in his nourishing of them,his endeavor is to give them the utmost pleasure,when they are ill,he feels the greatest anxiety;in mourning for them (dead),he exhibits every demonstration of grief;in sacrificing to them,he displays the utmost solemnity. When a son is complete in these five things (he may be pronounced) able to serve his parents.

"'He who (thus) serves his parents,in a high situation, will be free from pride;in a low situation,will be free from insubordination;and among his equals,will not be quarrelsome. In a high situation,pride leads to ruin;in a low situation,insubordination leads to punishment;among equals quarrelsomeness leads to wielding of weapons.

"'If those three things be not put away,though a son every day contribute beef,mutton,and pork to nourish his parents,he is not filial.'" 9 Filial piety,then,implies

9 The Sacred Books of the East,The Texts of Confucianism, translated by James Legge,Part. I,The Hsiao King,pp.480-481.

more than mere support. The idea that filial piety only meant the support of parents seems to have been prevalent during the time of Confucius. He attacked this false view and pointed out the fact that dogs and horses are also supported and that unless reverence, the other part of filial piety, is added to support there is no difference between the two cases. Respect for parents required that a son should not disregard their teaching and ways of action within three years after their death. In the *Analects*, it is recorded, "The Master said, 'If the son for three years does not alter from the way of his father, he may be called filial.'" 10 At times, however, this doctrine of family loyalty was pushed to extremes and resulted in sophistry and a lowered ethical ideal. For example, we read, "Confucius said, 'Among us, in our part of the country, those who are upright are different from this. The father conceals the misconduct of the son, and the son conceals the misconduct of the father. Uprightness is to be found in this.'" 11

10 The Chinese Classics, translated by James Legge, Vol. I, Confucian *Analects*, IV, xx, p. 171.

11 Ibid, XIII, xviii, 2, p. 270.

In "The Three Principles of the People", Dr. Sun Yat-Sen discussing some of the qualities highly esteemed in China's old moral standards, after speaking of the importance of Loyalty, continues, "Filial Devotion is even more a characteristic of China, and we have gone far beyond other nations in the practice of it. Filial duty as revealed in the 'Canon of Filial Piety' covers almost the whole field of human activity, touching every point; there is no treatise on filial piety in any civilized country to-day that is so complete. Filial Devotion is still indispensable. If the people of the democracy can carry out Loyalty and Filial Devotion to the limit, our state will naturally flourish." 12 Then he goes on to discuss Kindness and Love, Faithfulness and Justice, and Love of Harmony and Peace. Dr. Sun, while anxious for progress, is not willing to surrender the best in China's past. However his endorsement is in general terms and does not necessarily carry with it any sanction of the rites of ancestor worship. On the other hand he does not condemn it. He has thus taken up a position which is

12 Sun Yat-Sen, The Three Principles of the People (San Min Chu I), p. 128.

acceptable both to the conservatives and to the most radical and hot-headed young progressives.

If China errs on the side of too much parental control and subservience to the past, certainly the West is also guilty of a lack of such control. The viewpoint of a progressive, young Chinese who came of an old, cultured, official family, on this question and his suggestion as to how filial piety might be put upon a better basis both in China and in other countries is very quaintly and interestingly set forth by Hwuy-Ung, "Respected brother, in your last valuable letter you ask me things regarding Filial Piety in this country. The difference in the relations between father and son in the Middle Kingdom and in the same relations in this land of the New Golden Mountains, is only to be compared to the difference there is between light and darkness; or between the summit of the highest peak in Thibet and the lowest depth of the ocean. With us filial piety is servility and awe, with them it is independence and indifference. After long comparison, I have measured that they would each be better by drawing nearer from opposite poles and seeking more genial climate in the temperate zone; for warmth of affection is lacking in both.

"With us a father is a god;his children his slaves. But have they not individuality? Have they not the responsibility of their future? To be taught only to look backwards to their progenitors,rather than forwards to their own lives and their posterity,for what good? A river,with occasional backwash along its banks,will not flow towards its source,but downward.Our doctrines of filial piety and ancestor worship have arrested the downward current and made waters stagnate. This exaggerated reverence for the past has dammed back the spirit of innovation and progress. The subservience of youth to old age has hampered enterprise. It is barbarous that a father has power over the life of his child,against nature,and the rights of the State. The Master admitted that:'A youth is to be regarded with respect. How do we know that his future will not be equal to our present?'It might be greater. The obedience required of a son with us should not be that of a slave,but of one who freely yields it in a sense of justice and a feeling of affection. This is what Meng (Mencius) understood when he said:'Filial affection for parents is the working of benevolence.'

"In this land (Australia) instead of filial piety,there

is hardly respect. Neglect of control by the parents is the cause, because of the hard struggle against nature in the wilds." 13

In China filial piety went to seed. It was carried to the extreme of demanding an unquestioning subservience and strict obedience to age and authority. It had much to say about the duties of children towards their parents but made no mention of any obligations that parents had to discharge for the benefit of their children. It has a paralyzing effect upon progress. It effectually stopped the stream of civilization and kept China stagnant for centuries. But this was not the fault of filial piety. Every virtue has its corresponding vice which masquerades in its form with alluring enticements to deceive the simple. The virtue of filial devotion became vitiated in the popular practice of ancestor worship by the ignorant, superstitious masses. Aside from these corruptions, there is something wonderful about the filial devotion found and taught in China. Although a rendering of support was regarded as fundamental, yet more

13 Hwuy-Ung, A Chinaman's Opinion of Us and of His Own People, p. 97.

than this was required in order to satisfy the demands of true filial piety. The rest of the world could sit at the feet of China and learn much about this very important virtue. The promise attached to the Fifth Commandment has been literally fulfilled in the case of the Chinese nation, and this is a fact which might well be pondered by the psychologists and child-training specialists of Western nations who are now engaged in setting the child upon a pedestal in order to make sure that he be given plenty of opportunity to develop, strengthen his individuality and be himself without repression, even when this results in forcing his elders into a secondary position in the background.

CHAPTER VII

ANCESTRAL RITES

There is a widespread belief in China, indeed it may be said to be well-nigh universal, of Taoist origin, that the soul possesses three abodes after the decease of the body, or crudely, that there are three souls. The first two souls are localized. One is in the tomb with the corpse and the other dwells in the ancestral or spirit-tablet. The third is a free spirit that inhabits Hades or the spirit-world, wherever that may be. Ancestor worship deals only with the first two souls but the welfare of the third is conditioned upon the care and worship which the other two receive. The bereaved offer sacrifices at the grave for the sake of the first soul and before the spirit-tablet for the sake of the second soul. Many superstitious practices have grown up in connection with the rites practiced for the benefit of these souls. Taoist and Buddhist priests are often employed in connection with these rites. The pseudo-science of feng-shui has as its professors or experts Taoist priests. They are supposed to be skilled at selecting

sites for graves that will take into account all of the prevailing forces, such as wind, water, mountain, valley, etc. that exercise a large influence over the movements of the spirits who control the destiny of the family. The selection of the sites for graves is often prolonged, on the excuse that a favorable site has not yet been found, for a period of time proportionate to the gullibility of the bereaved and the size of their pocket book. When graves are bricked up a small hole is usually left about half the size of a brick so that the spirit may have freedom to come and go, in case he is not satisfied to remain in the grave all of the time. In connection with the third soul, or the one which inhabits the spirit-world, Buddhist and Taoist priests reap a rich harvest in the form of emoluments received for prayers or masses said for its benefit.

Ancestor worship is concerned with the souls which are in the grave and in the ancestral tablet. There are three altars at which ancestral worship is performed: one at the grave, one before the tablets at home, and one before the tablets of more remote ancestors in the clan ancestral temple. The altar at the grave is a flat table made of bricks or hewn out of solid stone and is of stereotyped shape

(See Illustration on page 131). It is just in front of the tumulus and only the graves of the very poor are without it. The mausolea of wealthy people and of high officials have temples in front of the mound which contain altars on which the spirit-tablet rests. The Imperial mausolea are of surpassing grandeur. At home and in the clan temple the altar is usually on a high table which stands before the wall where the scroll on which the names of ancestors are written is hung. The tablets are placed on the table up against the wall. Offerings are placed on a smaller table in front of the altar at certain fixed times. They are presented by the male members of the family with the father or grandfather at their head.

Wealthy families or clans have ancestral temples where the spirit-tablets of the older generations are kept and where sacrifices are offered to them. In these temples are also kept the genealogical tables which extend back for ten, twenty, thirty or even sixty generations and which are kept with such great care that their reliability is beyond question. The smoke of daily incense ascends in these temples and twice a month, offerings of fruit and other eatables are presented, accompanied by solemn prostrations. The injunction

laid upon the arranger in the ancestral temple to be reverent in ancient days is recorded in the Book of History and affords testimony as to the existence of this worship from the very earliest times. Ancestral rites as practiced at the present time differ very little from those described in the Classics. A slight elaboration of the rites occurred at the time of Micius.

The semi-monthly worship carried on in the ancestral hall of a wealthy family of the official class in South China is described by Hwuy-Ung as follows: "It seems a short time past-so clear in my recording faculty are those days-I stood in the hall of ancestors in my father's house,dressed, like other members of our family,in holiday attire. Plainly I see the altar at the end of the hall-a long varnished table. On the steps in front,the tablets inscribed with the names of our ancestors,torches and incense-sticks burning. The square table bearing the family records,at a little distance,with seats around. Again I see my revered father and mother,as was custom each half moon,approach the altar. I resemble-hear (seem to hear) the invocation to Heaven asking for guidance and protection. The singing of the ancestral hymn,accompanied by calling on the spirits of the

dead. Even at that milk age I was impressed by the solemnity of the rites. I believed that the departed spirits were summoned from the Great Unknown to receive our homage. Each spirit for the time dwelling in the tablet to his honor. Having fear I looked to see them and prayed to Heaven for their peace and good-will. With pity I thought of these unseen spirits wandering in space, comforted and appeased by our worship. The words of the Master would be repeated by my father and I would be shaken with pallid terror-'How abundantly do spiritual beings display the powers that belong to them! We look for them, but do not see them; we listen to, but do not hear them; yet they enter into all things, and there is nothing without them. They cause all the people in the empire to fast and purify themselves, and array themselves in their richest dresses, in order to attend at their sacrifices. Then, like overflowing water, they seem to be over the heads, on the right, and left of their worshipers.' This I believed. Years below I accepted the opinion of Emperor Kang-Hi: 'We know their souls cannot come to inhabit the tablets; but we try to persuade ourselves that we are in their presence.' This has more reason. Offerings were brought-rice, grain and wine. The voice of my father, now time in my ears, addressing

all present, recounted the good actions of each ancestor back to several generations and, as he were a reincarnation of each one-spoke in his name. He bade us be worthy of them and be renovated in virtue. At that time, my mind was how greatly impressed? In trembling apprehension I thought I heard the voices of the dead, long silenced, once again speaking from emptiness! Then we sat at small table-my father, my mother, I, their first-born, and my brothers, reverent and subdued. My father spoke again, as a judge, of our obligations to each other. He counselled us to forgiveness for wrong done us. He reproved us for any shortcoming and urged us to uphold righteousness and benevolence. Not revere and honor thus a father, who could? If every father had in his heart so to improve his children, humanity would be how much better?" 1

The bronze sacrificial vessels now used in ancestral temples are exact copies of the ancient models of the Chou dynasty (B.C. 1122-255) used for the same purpose. The art of making and ornamenting bronzes dates from a very high antiquity for even in the Shang dynasty (B.C. 1783-1134),

1 Hwuy-Ung, *A Chinaman's Opinion of Us and of His Own People*, pp. 93-94.

it had arrived at an advanced stage. A varied assortment of these old bronze sacrificial vessels from the earliest dynasties is on display in the Imperial Museum in Peking. To a Westerner hailing from a land where styles and fashions last but for a day, this persistence of early models comes as a revelation.

Interesting ceremonies accompany the taking of the spirit-tablet to the ancestral temple, and, in the case of the Imperial family, these are quite elaborate. "The Times" of November 27, 1909 contained this news item describing these ceremonies in connection with the transference of the ancestral tablet of the late Empress Dowager Tzū Hsi, "The conveyance of Her Majesty's ancestral tablet from the tombs of the Eastern Hills to its resting-place in the Temple of Ancestors in the Forbidden City was a ceremony in the highest degree impressive and indicative of the vitality of those feelings which make ancestor-worship the most important factor in the life of the Chinese. The tablet, a simple strip of lacquered wood, bearing the name of the deceased in Manchu and Chinese characters, had been officially present at the burial. With the closing of the great door of the tomb the spirit of the departed ruler is supposed to be translated to

the tablet, and to the latter is therefore given honour equal to that which was accorded to the sovereign during her lifetime. Borne aloft in a gorgeous chariot draped with Imperial yellow silk and attended by a large mounted escort, Tzū Hsi's tablet journeyed slowly and solemnly, in three day's stages, from the Eastern Hills to Peking. At each stage it rested for the night in a specially constructed pavilion, being 'invited' by the Master of the Ceremonies, on his knees and with all solemnity, to be pleased to leave its chariot and rest. For the passage of this habitation of the spirit of the mighty dead the imperial road had been specially prepared and swept by an army of men; it had become a via sacra on which no profane feet might come or go. As the procession bearing the sacred tablet drew near to the gates of the capital, the Prince Regent and all the high officers of the Court knelt reverently to receive it. All traffic was stopped; every sound stilled in the streets, where the people knelt to do homage to the memory of the Old Buddha. Slowly and solemnly the chariot was borne through the main gate of the Forbidden City to the Temple of the Dynasty's ancestors, the most sacred spot in the Empire, where it was 'invited' to take its appointed place among the nine

Ancestors and their thirty-five Imperial Consorts. Before this could be done, however, it was necessary that the tablets of Tzū Hsi's son, T'ung Chih, and of her daughter-in-law, should first be removed from that august assembly, because due ceremony required that the arriving tablet should perform obeisance to those of its ancestors, and it would not be fitting for the tablet of a parent to perform this ceremony in the presence of that of a son or daughter-in-law. The act of obeisance was performed by deputy, in the person of the Regent acting for the child Emperor, and consisted of nine kotows before each tablet in the Temple, or about 400 prostrations in all. When these had been completed, with due regard to the order of seniority of the deceased, the tablets of the Emperor T'ung Chih and his wife were formally 'invited' to return to the Temple, where obeisance was made on their behalf to the shade of Tzu Hsi which had been placed in the shrine beside that of her former colleague and co-Regent, the Empress Tzu An." 2

The more immediate ancestors are worshipped in the home.

2 Bland and Backhouse, *China Under the Empress Dowager*, pp. 473-475.

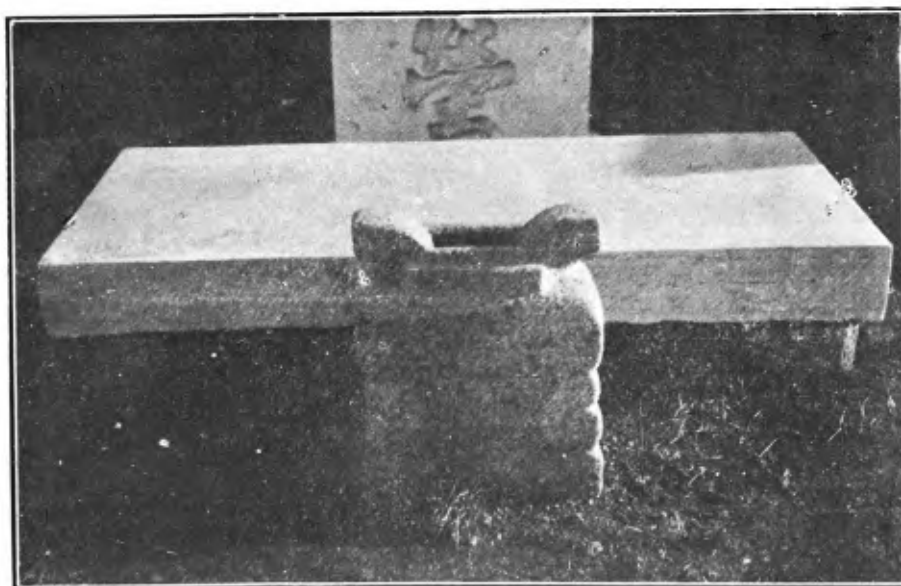
It is here that ancestor worship is carried on by the family unit, a component part of the clan. Wealthy families who can afford large houses build an ancestral hall which is set aside to be used only for that purpose. Families in more moderate circumstances set aside a single room in the dwelling to be used as a chapel or domestic sanctuary. The poorest families set aside a niche or shrine in the principal room of the house opposite to the entrance. If they cannot afford even this, they simply put the tablets on a table.

The necessity for keeping up the family genealogical records and worshipping even remote ancestors is indicated by the popular proverb, 祖宗雖遠祭祀不可

不誠, "Ancestors however remote must be sincerely sacrificed to." ³ However, worship of ancestral tablets in the home is usually kept up for only three, (in the case of the lowest classes this is often reduced to one) or, at the most five, generations, after which the tablet is removed to the clan temple if it is not too far distant. There are some people who live very far from the clan temple or

³ Scarborough-Allan, Chinese Proverbs, p. 282.

who are so poor that their clan does not have a temple and hence they simply remove the tablet of a distant ancestor from the family shrine and replace it with the tablet of a more recent ancestor. It is to this class of people that evangelists, in order to prove the hollowness of ancestor worship, put the questions, "What happens to the spirits whose tablets are thus taken out? Are they not still in need of food, clothes, and care?" It is obvious that ancestors of the last two or three generations are the principal ones that are worshipped in the home since they are the ones that are remembered best. When the memory of an ancestor and of his grave becomes weak or fails and he fades out of the life of the living, his place is taken by those who have died more recently. In spite of all that may be done to keep up tradition by orally handing down stories about more remote ancestors, those who have been long dead tend to be gradually forgotten and those who died before the generation worshipping were born have passed beyond the experience of that generation. For practical purposes, following the rules laid down in the "Sacred Edict" by the Emperor K'ang Hsi, a family is figured as consisting of four generations above the person in question and four generations below or nine generations



Photograph by the Author.

SACRIFICIAL ALTAR AND INCENSE URN
BEFORE A NON-CHRISTIAN GRAVE.
(See text on Page 157).

in all. No attempt is made to count beyond this limit for practical purposes in every day life. The maximum number of generations that can be living at the same time and hence be personally acquainted with one another is four. However, elaborate genealogies are kept for a much longer period because of family pride, as in the West, and in order to sacrifice to these more remote ancestors in the clan temple.

At the time of Confucius, grass images were sometimes used to represent the dead ancestors. This is mentioned in the Classics. Later, for a time previous to 210 B.C., "person-ators" or living descendants of the same surname, chosen according to certain rules, stood for the ancestors during the ceremony. With an impassive solemnity and dignity, they neither moved nor spoke during the ceremonies. They represented the re-incarnation or embodiment in flesh and blood of the ancestor worshipped. When Chin Shih Huang Ti overthrew the Chou dynasty, this practice along with many other old customs, was discontinued.

It is commonly believed that the use of the spirit-tablet originated with Chieh Tzu-T'ui. The story of its origin seems to be as follows: The King of Tsin was leading his army against his enemies when provisions ran low. In

order to give the king food, one of his men, Chieh Tzu-T'ui, cut off part of his thigh and had it cooked and presented to his sovereign, whose hunger was thus allayed. Due to the pain caused by his leg, Chieh Tzu-T'ui was unable to continue his march and fell behind. When the campaign had been victoriously concluded, the King rewarded many of his faithful followers but, in the flush of victory, forgot Chieh Tzu-T'ui. Since he had no means of livelihood, Chieh Tzu-T'ui decided to leave the country of Tsin. With his mother he ascended Mien Shan. Someone told the king that Chieh Tzu-T'ui was on Mien Shan and the king wished to appoint him to an official position but when messengers were sent to Chieh Tzu-T'ui with this news, [^]he refused to return on the grounds that the king had not treated him fairly and had forgotten his kindness. The king then sent men to set fire to three sides of the thick forest on Mien Shan and other men to watch the fourth side in the hope that Chieh Tzu-T'ui and his mother would flee out of the fourth side when they saw that the fire was threatening them on three sides. However, they did not flee and after the fire, their corpses were found. Chieh Tzu-T'ui had his arms around a tree and from the wood of this tree, the king had a pair of wooden shoes made to remember him by and a spirit-

tablet, to which sacrifices were offered. This account places the origin of the spirit-tablet in the latter part of the Chou dynasty (B.C. 350). Although the story sounds plausible enough, yet the existence of ancestor worship for such a long time prior to the date at which this would place the first use of the spirit-tablet would seem to call for its appearance at a much earlier period.

In the, 周禮, Chou Dynasty Ritual it is said that the spirit-tablet is to be worshipped in its shrine. According to a note in the same book, the spirit-tablet is the temporary dwelling place of the spirit during the ceremony. A description of the ancestral tablet is given in the, 吾學錄, Wu Hsueh Lu. It is usually made of chestnut wood, if this is obtainable. The most expensive ones are lacquered in order to help preserve them. It consists of two upright pieces of wood, the outer piece fitting into a groove near the top of the inner piece, and both set upright in a socket in a wooden base. Except when sacrifice is being offered before it, the tablet is enclosed in a wooden case. (See Illustration on page 110). White powder of a very fine texture, similar to that which women use on their faces, is worked into a paste and painted on the fronts of the outer and inner pieces so

that it will be easy to write upon them. The, 姓, sur-name and, 號, familiar name of the ancestor are written down the center of the outer piece, but not his, 名子, "Christian" name for it is not considered respectful to write his "Christian" name here. On the left hand side is written the name of the son or sons who are sacrificing. (See Illustration on page 25). Down the center of the inner piece is written the position of the grave and the directions in which the head and foot face with reference to the mountains of the neighborhood. On the left hand side of the inner piece is written the year, month, day, and hour of the death of the ancestor. On the inner piece at the right is written the year, month, day, and hour of the birth of the ancestor. (See Illustration on page 39). 4 Wood is scarce and is very expensive in all parts of China. Large photographic portraits are now often used to supplement or supplant the tablets.

I. Rites performed before ancestral tablets.

A. A daily, reverential bow, which may be accompanied by a simple prayer and the burning of incense in some cases, is

4 Tze Yuan or Chinese Encyclopoedic Dictionary, article on ,

神主, spirit-tablet.

performed by every member of the family before the ancestral tablets in the home. A very zealous and devout family bows before the tablets three times a day. The daily bow is very similar to the custom that prevailed in ancient Greece and Rome. By this means coöperation and unity in the family group is fostered and friction in the group is somewhat reduced. Some who do not perform the daily bow, burn incense and bow on the first of the month when, according to the Chinese calendar, the moon is dark, and the fifteenth of the month, when it is full.

B. Anniversaries of the births and deaths of ancestors are observed by appropriate ceremonies including the burning of incense before the tablets. In Shantung, these anniversary observances are continued only for the first three years after the death of the deceased.

C. Important matters that affect the family are reported to ancestors and, at the same time, religious services are performed before the tablets. In the Book of History and the Book of Poetry announcements were made to ancestors at the beginning and the end of all important undertakings. Success was attributed to their virtue but defeat was ascribed to the weakness of the individual. Offerings were made and

prayers were presented to them. In the days of the Empire, the attainment of a degree was always announced to the ancestors for it reflected honor on the entire family. At the present time, just as in days of yore, important matters are reported to ancestors.

1. The birth of a child involves the addition of a descendant and this fact must be announced to the ancestors, who reside during the ceremony in the tablets. In Shantung, this ceremony sometimes takes place at the winter solstice. At that time the name of the new son is added to the family register and offerings are presented before the tablets.

2. A betrothal must also be announced to the ancestors no matter whether it is a boy or a girl that is betrothed. This is a matter which is of concern to ancestors.

3. When a youth comes of age, his father invokes for him, in the ancestral temple, the guardian care of his forefathers, "that he may be a complete man, and not fall below the standard of excellence." This is an important event in the life of one of the descendants.

4. A marriage is also an important event. It is a time of great joy and ancestors should be remembered in times of joy as well as in times of sorrow. Moreover, it affects the

family quite directly. The bridegroom bows before his parents, the parents of the bride, the living relatives of the bride who are higher in blood rank, and, together with his relatives, he bows before the ancestral tablets of the bride. The bride must bow before her parents, the parents of the bridegroom, and the living relatives of the bridegroom who are higher in blood rank. In the marriage ceremony proper, the bridegroom presents his bride to his ancestors as a new member of the family and both of them bow before the tablets. When a son or a daughter is married, this fact is reverentially announced by the father to his ancestors, with offerings of fruit and wine.

5. During the days of the Empire, matters relating to the Imperial throne were reported to the ancestors of the reigning house. Formal announcement was made, in sacrifice, of any step that was proposed and the approval of the forefathers was sought. By means of divination the Emperors were able to learn whether the proposed step met with approval or disapproval. In some cases, it would appear that it was the attitude of Heaven which was consulted, through the forefathers. The adoption of an heir to the throne as well as every case of regular succession was formally announced to Imperial

ancestors. Ancestors were notified when Shun succeeded Yao in B.C.2300 and when Wu Wang overthrew the Shang dynasty and established the Chou dynasty in the 12th century B.C. In 1889 the Emperor and Empress Dowager took a pilgrimage to the tombs of their ancestors to report accession to the throne and the inter-regnum respectively. Ritual music was used in the worship of ancestors when it was performed by the Emperor or by a deputy representing him. 5 On February 18,1912 which was New Year's day according to the lunar calendar,Dr. Sun Yat-Sen in his capacity as leader of the Revolution offered at the Ming Tombs at Nanking,solemn thanksgiving to the spirits of the late Chinese dynasty for the restoration to the Chinese people of their liberties and for their freedom from the yoke of foreign,Manchu, domination. 6

6. The death of members of a family is announced to the ancestors of the family. A tablet is set up for the deceased,incense is burnt night and morning before it and

5 Ball,Things Chinese,p.463.

6 China Mission Year Book,1912,article by W.Sheldon Ridge on "Government Changes and National Movements," p.79.

the near relatives prostrate themselves before it for forty-nine days. In the case of an official, quite an elaborate ceremony accompanies the dotting of the tablet. The spirit-tablet is designated in Chinese by the characters,

神主, shen chu. For an official, the latter character is at first written in black ink as, 王, wang and the, 丶, dot written in red ink at the top which transforms the character into, 主, chu, is added at the grave. After the coffin has been placed in the tomb, an official taking up a brush-pencil which has never been used before, dips it in red ink, and assisted by four literary graduates or degree men of the old school, he adds the dot and from that time it is felt that the spirit of the deceased inhabits the tablet. It is carried back to the home and is shown all of the honors that were shown to the deceased before he departed from this life.

D. The Festival of Spirits which is held on the fifteenth day of the seventh month is of Buddhist origin. It comes at the time when the fruit is ripe. On the evening of this day incense and paper are burned, wine is poured out, food and fresh fruit are offered before the ancestral tablets and the customary worship is performed by the males of the family.

In South and Central China the custom still prevails of reading an invocation on this occasion. This invocation is written in the old classical style. If there is no one scholarly enough in the family to write it, the family may engage a scholar to produce it for them. At the time offerings are also presented for the benefit of orphan spirits so that they will not injure the living. 7

E. On the fifteenth day of the eighth month at the Mid-Autumn or Harvest Festival, which next to the New Year is the most important festival of the year, ancestors are again worshipped. Bowls of fruit are placed before the tablets accompanied by lighted candles and burning incense. The family eats at the same time in another room. The idea is that of a reunion of the past and present members of the family. The unity and solidarity of the family is stressed. This is a day for family reunions or homecomings similar to Thanksgiving, Harvest Moon, and Christmas in the West. Ceremonies are also held before the tablets in clan temples at this time.

7 See Records of the General Conference of the Protestant Missionaries of China, held at Shanghai, 1877, paper by Dr. M.T. Yates on "Ancestral Worship", pp. 370, 383 for a full treatment of the subject of offerings to orphan spirits.

F. The Winter Solstice, which comes in the eleventh month in the Chinese calendar, is an occasion for the offering of sacrifices before ancestral tablets in the home as well as in the clan temple. The ceremonies in the clan temple sometimes last from four to five hours. ⁸ The offerings are presented in thankful remembrance of the food which has been received during the year. There was a certain symbol^{ism} shown in choosing this particular day for the sacrifices. It is in the midst of winter when nature seems to have reached the extremity of her lifelessness. The apparent death of nature turns one's thoughts to loved ones who have died. In some cities, shops close for the day in order to allow their employees to remain at home to perform these most important rites.

⁸ The New China Review, Vol. II, No. 3, June 1920, article by E.T.C. Werner on "Reform in Chinese Mourning Rites" (which contains a translation of an original document by Dr. Hu Shih on this subject in which this statement appears), p. 231.

CHAPTER VIII

ANCESTRAL RITES (CONTINUED)

G. The principal time for the worship before ancestral tablets is on the first day of the New Year. The New Year holiday is the premier holiday in China. Everyone who can possibly do so, returns to his old home at this time. At the end of 1928, the Nationalist government ordered that the foreign New Year be observed and though this order was partially carried out, it was done with little spirit and with much reluctance. It will take a long time for the people to give up the old lunar calendar and the celebrations connected with the New Year-if indeed they are given up at all. Preparations are begun some days before the beginning of the New Year. Houses and shops are cleaned and tools are put in order. New clothes are made and food supplies sufficient for several days ahead are bought as the shops are closed during the New Year holidays. On the afternoon of New Year's Eve family genealogical registers, ancestral portraits and inherited art treasures, such as scrolls inscribed in a beautiful hand or painted by talented ancestors,

are hung on the walls. Everything is prepared and in readiness. With some people, it is the custom to lay down a piece of log at each door and it is said that the logs are used to tie the ancestors' horses to while they stop and enjoy the sacrifice. On New Year's Eve two or three men and boys of each family go to the family graves to burn paper and incense by way of inviting the spirits of their ancestors to return to the old home and enjoy the happy New Year season. At midnight of the second day of the first month, the spirits are sent back again, after the festivities (lasting twenty-four hours) are over. On New Year's Eve a good dinner is enjoyed by the family in the evening. The father, as head of the family, takes the first seat at the table, and the mother takes the second while the children are seated in the order of their age. Interesting stories are told. Before the ancestral tablets or the family register offerings of food are placed, the idea being that the ancestors are to share in the happy occasion as guests. The food is placed before them first, with chopsticks near at hand so that they may enjoy it before the family begins to eat. The ancestors partake only of the spiritual essence of the food and leave the rest of it to be eaten by their descendants. The house is brightly

illuminated by means of numerous candles and lamps. The family gathers around the festive board. The principal dish contains delicious meat dumplings. Some of the dumplings contain a coin, a date, a bean or a chestnut. The person who eats the dumpling that contains the coin will be rich, the one who happens on the date will be happy all the time, the one who finds the bean will never lose his life, and the one who discovers the chestnut will be favored with much happiness. The children are supremely happy and carry on a lively conversation. After supper is finished, all bow before the tablets or the family register. Candles provide light and incense furnishes a sweet-smelling scent. Under such circumstances, how could the ancestral spirits fail to enjoy this family reunion?

After these preliminaries, the family retires for the night but there is no sleep—at least, there is none for the younger members of the family for they are as excited as the children of the West are on Christmas Eve, just before the visit of Santa Claus. At midnight, the family arises and the new clothes are eagerly put on. With bright, happy faces the children greet the New Year. Before they start on the happy program of the day, they perform the most important act of

of all the year-the worship of ancestors. It has first place in the work and play of the year. In the dead of night and in the privacy of the home or the ancestral temple, ancestors are revered and sacrifices are offered. The ceremony includes the burning of incense, the burning of sacrificial paper, and the offering of the finest foods and wines that the family can afford. This is but a part of the reverence for age, as is shown by the fact that immediately afterwards all the children come forth and kotow before their parents and grandparents. In some cases, candles are lighted for the first time at midnight. Shortly afterwards, the New Year is greeted with the firing of strings of firecrackers. At this time it is customary to worship not only ancestors but also idols and, especially in the case of traders and merchants, the God of Wealth. Some food is also placed on a table by the door for the benefit of orphan or forlorn ghosts who are unprovided for by their descendants and who might rudely intrude or even inflict indiscriminate harm were they not remembered. All males in the family go to the ancestral hall in groups and kotow before the tablets there. The details of the sacrifices vary somewhat with the circumstances of the family. Some are very elaborate and expensive. In some cases,

the father speaks to his children about the virtues and wonderful deeds of the ancestors who are being worshipped and exhorts them to emulate the glorious examples thus placed before them. In every case, the males of the family kotow before the tablets with the customary three kneelings and nine bows--three bows to each time they kneel. The children are very noisy and happy until daybreak. When it begins to get light, the men and boys go forth to visit their relatives and friends and to wish them a Happy New Year and much wealth. Boys enjoy the firecrackers and girls wear paper flowers in their hair while men play on various musical instruments such as violins, gongs, cymbals, etc. The family feasts together on meat dumplings and, if they can afford it, on wine. Bows are performed before the tablets, incense is kept burning, and wine is poured out every day for the first fifteen days of the new year or until the first full moon when the Feast of Lanterns comes. After that time, the food is removed and divided among the clan, in the case of ancestral temples. In the family, sometimes it is eaten on the second day after the ancestors have been sent on their way with the firing of firecrackers. The length of time during which the food remains before the tablets thus

varies from two to fifteen days. The ceremony at midnight on New Year's Eve is a solemn spirit banquet, a family reunion in which the family is thought of as consisting not only of the present generation but also of those who have passed on before.

On the morning of January 23, 1928 (Chinese New Year's Day), in company with two other teachers, I called at the home of one of my students. We were received by the student and his father and tea was served to us in the reception room. On the wall was hung a scroll on which was inscribed the family register extending back for over one hundred years. The family has lived in Chefoo for six generations. They have a landed estate and are in comfortable circumstances. The father told us as we entered the room that all of the ceremony was simply superstition but that it must be kept up as it had been handed down as tradition from generation to generation. On our left, as we faced the wall, there was a table where offerings were placed and incense was burned before the God of Wealth. On our right, there was the spirit-tablet of the oldest son of the family who had died the preceding spring. A table containing offerings and lighted incense was placed in front of this tablet. The family

register was on the wall in the center. In front of the register on a table were placed large, round pieces of steamed bread. Each piece of bread was about eight inches in diameter. We were informed that formerly these pieces of bread were required by custom to be eighteen inches in diameter, and hence were very expensive for people in humble circumstances, but now custom allows them to be made smaller. There were also several kinds of vegetables and sweet cakes. The central ancestral tablet was a general one for all of the family from the earliest times. On each side of it were arranged the tablets of the heads of successive generations. They were placed alternately on the right and left sides of the central tablet and even with it. The tablets were pieces of wood about two inches wide and eight inches high. In front of the tables on which the tablets stood was a rug. On New Year's Eve, after dark, the spirits of the ancestors were received and at that time paper money and incense were burned. This was done in the courtyard. The paper money that was used was of three kinds: common, cheap, brown paper with the impression of the ancient Chinese cash stamped on it, ingots fashioned from white gilded paper to represent silver, and ingots fashioned from yellow gilded paper to represent gold. It is

thought that the ancestors return to their old home to spend the night of New Year's Eve with the male members of the family. The women do not count as they are not eligible to carry on the worship. On New Year's morning about six o'clock, the male members of the family had gathered in the reception room to kotow to the spirit-tablets and to burn incense. Paper money was then burned in the courtyard and the spirits were escorted on their way back to the spirit-world. This family did not wait for the twenty-four hours to elapse but sent the spirits back on New Year's morning immediately after the ceremony. The male members of the family come to this room three times a day, or after every meal, for fifteen days to kotow and burn incense before the tablets. At the end of fifteen days, the tablets and food are removed and the food is eaten by the members of the household.

The rites in connection with the sacrifices at the New Year time are changing in the case of some of the student class. From their study of science they have been led to doubt the existence of the spirits and hence they have given up the burning of paper, the burning of incense, the kotow and everything else that they think is of no practical use.

They confine themselves to a bow and to the offering of food, valuable only as a gesture of respect and thoughtful devotion. In some cases, fresh flowers are used. It is not improbable that this type of change will become even more widespread but it is unlikely that the rites will disappear altogether.

Every day during the first fifteen days of the year, the male members of the clan gather at the ancestral temple to kotow before the tablets. During all of this time the sacrifices remain on the tables in front of the tablets and family register. In Chefoo, it is the custom to throw open the ancestral halls on the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth days of the first month so that the public may be free to examine and admire the sacrifices. Large numbers of people avail themselves of this privilege. The sacrifices are very costly but as they are offered thus elaborately only once a year and as clan temples are endowed for this purpose by means of ancestral land, the expense is easily met. Even if an assessment is necessary, the size of the clan makes it possible to raise the amount needed by requesting a reasonable share from each family. A typical ancestral temple is that of the Chang clan. The family register was hung on the wall

facing the entrance. The customary chairs and tables were placed around the walls as though to prepare for ancestral guests. In front of the register were tables containing burning candles, burning incense, three sacrificial cups, two wine pitchers, and many different varieties of food including large, round pieces of bread decorated with dates. Various dishes were also placed on side tables. In a number of dishes were small colored figures of gods made out of a sticky flour paste. They were very realistic and must have been very expensive. The principal object in the center was a large memorial arch of an intricate design on which a number of characters had been engraved. This arch was made of pastry which had been fried to a crisp brown. At the extreme right was a boar that had been completely dressed except for a few tufts of hair left in the middle of his back. At the extreme left was a goat that had been dressed in a like manner. A large motto on the wall read, "Always speaking of filial piety."

II. There are certain rites which take place before or after the burial ceremony. To be properly buried is the supreme desideratum with the Chinese. It is planned for well in advance. The location of graves and of cemeteries is

dependent on feng-shui doctrines, a most elaborate system of superstition. The conservative system is consistent. Elders are revered while alive and provision for their burial is often made long beforehand. Costly funeral robes are sometimes given as presents and are most acceptable. Vaulted tombs are built of stone or brick to receive the coffin and often they stand empty many years until the death of the person for whom they have been prepared. A wealthy man may be buried with two of his wives and, in that case, a large tomb for all three is prepared with three separate compartments or vaults. It is a simple matter to tear down the tumulus and enter each coffin when the time comes. A hole left in the brick facing of the tumulus indicates that that particular vault has not yet been filled. (See Illustration on page 82). There are many types and models of graves. Much time and money is used in locating them properly. Coffins are made of heavy wood that will last for a long time. They are very expensive. They are sometimes presented in anticipation of the death of a father or mother or someone of rank. They are not infrequently to be seen reposing in the home awaiting the death of their owner. There is a feeling of security when one's expensive coffin and tomb



A TYPE OF PAPER MONEY BURNED
AT THE GRAVE BY BUDDHISTS.
(SEE TEXT ON PAGE 164).

have been made ready and a decent burial is assured. The Chinese value these preparations for death much as Westerners value life insurance. When these preparations have been made, no matter even if reverses and poverty should come, family pride will not have to be sacrificed. After the body has been placed in the coffin, it not infrequently remains uninterred for months. It may rest in a temple, in a field, by the house or in the house. The propitious day for the burial must be determined by the priests or geomancers. This delay in burial is another reason for using good coffins. The same reverential care which was evidenced before death is continued and even intensified after death. The corpse is carefully prepared for burial. Relatives and friends call to condole with the family and gold and silver paper ingots are burned for the use of the spirit who has so recently gone to the other world. Buddhist or Taoist priests celebrate ceremonies for the benefit of the dead. In Eastern Shantung, live roosters are sometimes noticed on coffins that are being carried overland to the family burial ground. It is said that they are placed there to frighten away evil spirits who might approach during the night and disturb the rest of the deceased. When the rooster crows, the evil spirits

are led to believe that daybreak is near at hand and are put to flight. The various ceremonies that are performed at the time of burial and the superstitious practices that have grown up in connection therewith comprise too large a subject to enter upon here. Mention may be made however of the, 路祭, road sacrifice which is very commonly performed, in the Chefoo district, by a friend of the family while the funeral procession is en route to the grave. Matting is spread on the ground in the road along which the coffin is to pass and an awning or canopy is stretched across the road for the coffin to rest under. The coffin is allowed to rest under the canopy during the ceremony and all of the family kneels around it. A table covered with meat (hog's head or a piece of pork) or fruit, bread, stucco (mud) figures, or other offerings is brought out and put in front of the coffin. The sacrificer kotows before the coffin, pours out libations from three wine cups, again kotows before the coffin, takes three bundles of incense and lifts them high above his head in the direction of the coffin three times and brings them down, and kotows a third time before the coffin. Then he rises and stands aside. The family then kotows to him as a mark of appreciation for what he has done and after

the table is removed,the procession resumes its way. At the time of burial there is a simple announcement. When the grave is bricked up,a small hole about the size of half a brick is sometimes left so that the spirit may have free ingress and egress.

III. Rites are periodically performed at the grave. Since the grave is the resting place of one of the souls, much of ancestral worship is localized there. The sacrifice at the grave is offered on a flat,rectangular stone or brick altar which is placed about two or three feet in front of the tumulus. The sticks of burning incense are put in a stone sacrificial urn which stands just in front of the altar. (See Illustration on page 131). In this worship at the grave,bowls of food are placed on the stone altar and left for a few minutes so that they may be enjoyed by the spirit. Wine is poured out on the ground for him and paper is burned. The three kneelings and nine bows are also an indispensable part of the ceremony. The people who are influenced by superstitious ideas really believe that the spirits are in need of the food. Juliet Bredon reports one form of this common belief as follows,"In the East,beloved souls are compared to willow fluff,and they are said to float on the

earth surface as the fluff floats over a river,whence, being nourished,they rise again to make obeisance to the Lord of Heaven. This pretty belief is a popular explanation of the food and drink offered to the spirits of the dead at the grave side-the chief rite of ancestral worship." 1 The belief is held that spirits in the next world are in need of the same comforts and necessities that they had in this world. Paper and bamboo models of the real articles are burned and in this way by a kind of figure of speech the real articles are supposed to be forwarded to the spirit-world. Among the things thus offered are houses,boats, clothes,bills of exchange,spirit-world banknotes,mock-silver, and mock-gold dollars. The spirit-world banknotes illustrated on pages 53 and 96 are printed in different colors. The "Bank of Hades" variety is issued in denominations of one, one hundred,one thousand,and ten thousand dollars. These notes are not expensive. In February 1929,one hundred of them,of any denomination desired,cost only twopence in Peking. "The Bank of Hades and Heaven" variety was evidently invented by some ingenious and practical person who foresaw

1 Juliet Bredon,Peking,p.310.

the demand there might be for currency good in either region. No good Confucianist can think of an ancestor in Hades. On the other hand, many Taoists and Buddhists believe that their ancestors are suffering in purgatory or Hades. Here is money that is good anywhere in the spirit-world. If one is uncertain as to the exact abode of one's ancestors, it is impossible to make a mistake when this variety of paper money is used. It is issued in denominations of ten thousand, twenty thousand, fifty thousand, and one hundred thousand dollars. The poor burn cheap paper which is supposed to represent money or clothes. That the inconsistency of all of this is understood by many is proved by the common proverb, **假銀子肚裏空銅錢買哄祖宗**, "You use good copper cash to buy sham silver with which to cheat your ancestors." ² The worship at the graves is usually performed by the oldest son as the family representative or else by some other male member of the family. However, if there are no sons, a woman can burn paper at her husband's grave. At the spring festival the whole family may go out together to the graves.

² Scarborough-Allan, Chinese Proverbs, p. 280.

The levelling of graves with each change of dynasty had little effect on ancestor worship. It is commonly said that no one knows his ancestors ten generations back. They are simply names to him and units in the line. One's personal acquaintance is naturally limited to about four generations at the most. Graves have been levelled even when there was no change of dynasty. With such a thick population, the graves sometimes become too thick. Many families move away from their home district leaving a number of graves and these may be levelled by neighbors if there is no one to watch after them. When graves are levelled, the people simply start over again from the beginning and worship those who are buried from time to time.

The Feast of Lanterns comes on the fifteenth day of the first month at the time of the first full moon of the new year. It is a time for rejoicing. The long winter nights have been depressing. The cheery light of a full moon has a reassuring effect. It comes at the end of the fifteen days of rest and play which, for all of those financially able to take such a long holiday, have ushered in the new year. This occasion is the climax of the holiday season. Lighted lanterns are placed at the graves and in the clan temples.

The lantern used by the common people in Chefoo is made of an ordinary carrot which has been hollowed out and cut off. Oil and a wick are put in the hollow. Since men in this world are enjoying the light of the moon, they cannot bear to think that their ancestors in the other world are in darkness and so they take the lamps to the graves and leave them there for the evening so that their ancestors may enjoy the occasion also. A representative of the family burns paper, pours out wine, and worships in the usual way at the grave on this night. Then the firing of firecrackers signifies the end of the fifteen, happy days of the New Year vacation.

Worship is performed at the graves in the spring at the time of the Ching Ming, or Clear Brightness, festival. This festival comes on April 5th or 6th - 104 days after the Winter Solstice. The people gather at the family graves to honor the dead. Often it is a picnic occasion and the family may spend a good part of the day enjoying the warm sunshine and rejoicing in the return of spring. Sometimes only a representative of the family goes to the graves in place of the whole group. This is regarded as an especially fitting time of year for this ceremony since it comes when nature is beginning to burst into life again after the long, dreary months of

apparent death during the winter season. The graves are swept, rubbish is removed, tall grass and weeds are pulled up, and dirt is placed again on parts of the tumulus from which it has been washed away by the rains or the melting of the winter snows. Ching Ming is much like Memorial Day in the West. Incense is burned in the stone urn in front of the tumulus, wine is poured out on the ground or placed in cups, and food is offered on the stone altar. If all of the family is present, each member kotows before the grave in his turn. Paper money is burned and, in some cases, firecrackers are set off. While the paper money is burning, wine is sometimes poured on the flames in order to render the fluid invisible and consequently available for the use of the spirits. Little bits of yellow paper are placed on the tumulus and are weighted down by stones. These are sometimes stamped with the image of copper cash and so represent money being forwarded to the other world. Sometimes a prayer is offered but this does not seem to be a common feature of the ceremonies near Chefoo. DuBose quotes such a prayer, "The following extracts are from a prayer of the Emperor Taokwang, April 1832: 'I presume to come before the grave of my ancestor-----. Cherishing sentiments of veneration I look up and sweep your

tomb. Prostrate, I pray that you will come and be present, and that you will grant to your posterity that they may be prosperous and illustrious----- . Always grant your safe protection. My trust is in your divine spirit. Reverently I present the five-fold sacrifice.' " 3 After the rites have been performed, the worshippers "return with their hearts thinking that their fathers have good places to dwell in, food to eat, wine to drink, and sons to honor them." 4 The attitude of other middle school students towards the Ching Ming worship is shown by two phrases used in essays on the subject. One boy wrote that it was the "worst of all the bad customs in the world" and another said that it was "superstitious, but taught by Confucius."

The Festival of Spirits on the fifteenth day of the seventh month is the occasion for the summer visit to the ancestral tombs. It is the Chinese "All Souls' Day". The customary rites are performed and, in addition, sacrifice is offered to the orphan spirits.

In the fall, people go to the graves on the first day of

3 DuBose, *The Dragon, Image and Demon*, pp. 83-84.

4 From an essay by a Chinese middle school student.

the tenth Chinese moon, or month, in order to burn paper for the benefit of their loved ones in the other world. With the approach of cold weather, they wish to send winter clothing to their loved ones. Incense is burned before the graves. Pieces of paper are weighted down with rocks and left dotting the tumulus. (See Illustration on page 167). This is a spirit festival. The poorer people use paper stamped with the imprint of copper cash. The people who can afford it, buy paper on which is printed a Buddhist prayer. (See Illustration on page 154). If this is burned and thus sent to the spirits, the gods of Hades will protect them against evil spirits who might harm them. There is also a Taoist prayer that is used for this purpose. (See Illustration on page 64).

During the winter, one of the times for the performance of the rites is the Winter Solstice. On this day, ancestors are worshipped in the home, in the clan temple, and at the grave. At the graves, bundles of common paper (red is used for grandfathers and more remote ancestors) and sticks of incense are burned. Then the kotow is performed. Wine is poured out in a line perpendicular to the front of the grave from left to right and then from right to left and is

supposed to go to the other world to be imbibed by the deceased. At first, some paper is put on the top of the grave and a stone is put on it to hold it down. Then some more paper is unfolded and put on the ground near the head of the grave. A circle is drawn round it on the ground with a stone (women use their long hair pins as they dislike to use stones). Then it is lighted. The paper has stamped on it the likeness of a copper cash and the burning of the paper is supposed to transfer money to the spirits of the deceased in the other world. Incense sticks are sometimes put inside of the paper to be burned. On one occasion, a blind man was noticed being led to a grave. He insisted on lighting the paper that was to be burned. Many feel that they must carry on these rites even if they have to overcome great obstacles or handicaps in order to do so.

In Central China, at the time of the New Year food and drink are placed on the graves, candles are lighted, paper money is burned, and bows are made by all members of the family who are present. In North China, the New Year's day ceremonies are limited to the clan ancestral temples and the domestic shrines.

IV. There are certain rites in connection with the

official mourning for the deceased. White mourning garments are donned. In some cases, the chief mourner leaves his home, for a time, and sleeps in a temporary mat-shed. The Classics minutely prescribe the official mourning and the sacrifices to be offered for all ranks of officials and for the common people. Although they are elaborate, yet they are said to be restrictions on the extravagance of earlier customs. The period of mourning was originally supposed to be three years but this was interpreted to mean parts out of three separate years or twenty-seven months in all. The son had been expected to spend this time by the graveside of his parent, a custom which probably dated from the time when the corpse was not buried and it was necessary to guard it from wild animals, but this requirement was removed when provision was made for the proper interment of the corpse. Less than a generation ago, Imperial favor was shown to a partially demented son who lived for a long period of time near his mother's grave which was located not far from Paotingfu in the province of Chihli. The trend at the present time is away from such excesses. According to the regulations laid down in the Classics, there are five sacrifices. The first takes place shortly after the burial and is offered in



Photograph by the Author.

**APPEARANCE OF A GRAVE ON THE
FIRST DAY OF THE TENTH MONTH**

The pieces of paper indicate
that it has had tendance.

(See text on page 164).

the house before the spirit-tablet. The second is offered on the hundredth day. The third and fourth are offered on the anniversary of the death. The fifth is offered on the fifth day of the twenty-seventh month and marks the end of the period of family mourning. After that, sacrifice is performed annually on the anniversary of the death. At the times of mourning, there are religious services before the tablets. The mourning of the family is provided for by rules set forth in the Classics and five sorts of mourning clothes of sackcloth or hemp are specified which are regulated in quality of material according to the degree of relationship of the wearer to the deceased. The mourning signifies a sacrificial act, for the mourner symbolically offers his good clothing and valuables to the departed. Another interpretation might be that he deprives himself of the pleasure of wearing his finery for a time in order that he may the better get out of himself and think more about his ancestors. The children of the deceased must fast during the period of mourning-that is, they must eat only the plainest food and must avoid feasts. As is to be expected, the rites vary somewhat in detail over China.

CHAPTER IX
THE MEANING OF ANCESTOR WORSHIP

The essence of worship is in the attitude of the heart and mind. It is impossible for one human being to judge of the inner motives of another. Certain rites may be regarded as constituting real worship, or as merely denoting a reverential state of mind, according to the viewpoint of the one who performs the rites. In worship, the inner attitude is more important than external details such as place, time, posture, circumstances, etc. though the latter may either be helpful for the development of the spirit of worship or may discourage it. However, the spirit of worship is not inseparable from set circumstances and is not bound and in worship it is the spirit of the worshipper that counts. It is more important to ask whether the mental attitude is one of worship than whether the outward position of the body might indicate worship.

The fact that men kotow when performing ancestor worship does not ipso facto indicate that they are performing real worship. Since children kotow to living parents why

should they be forbidden to kotow to them after they are deceased? A missionary states that he feels that foreigners have been unduly prejudiced against the kotow and that the Chinese Christians have been robbed of the privilege of kotowing to God. The kotow is an Oriental form of respectful greeting. It must be examined in the light of the Oriental customs and psychology which form its background. Westerners are prejudiced against it. In order to determine what it means in China, it must be viewed from an Oriental standpoint. Among the Israelites, prostration was sometimes a posture assumed in prayer and at other times it simply denoted reverence. It is certainly more sanctioned in the Bible than are our Western customs. Jacob bowed himself to the ground before Esau when acknowledging him as lord but this did not indicate worship. From ancient times, it was customary in China to kotow before the Emperor but this posture did not indicate that he was regarded as a deity. It was simply deferential and respectful. It is a form of ceremonial greeting in use between equals as well as towards superiors, though the latter use is, of course, much more common. The kotow may indicate homage, deep respect, or worship. It must be noted that it is not confined to worship.

In worship, and in former times in the Imperial presence, it was performed with three kneelings and three knockings of the head to each kneeling. The kotow, including its genuflections and prostrations, is often performed before parents or officials. Beggars offer to kotow before those who give them alms. Patients kotow before doctors who have healed them of their diseases. The use of the kotow in worship is well-known. In certain circumstances it undoubtedly connotes worship. Dr. Chang Po-Lin, teaching in a government school in Tientsin about twenty-five years ago, refused to kotow to the tablet of Confucius because he regarded it as the equivalent of worship and hence as inconsistent with Christian principles. This was also the view of Dr. W.M. Hayes, a missionary educator, who, while Principal of the Government Provincial College at Tsinan, refused to bow to the tablet of Confucius and was, as a result, forced to resign from his position in the College. Men are not always consistent and a divergence is not uncommon between their professions and their actions. It was most interesting to note that Communists, who openly opposed religion in all of its forms, on March 28, 1925 brought beautiful paper flowers and laid them before the coffin of Dr. Sun Yat-Sen in Central Park

in Peking, then bowed low two or three times before the coffin with the photograph of the deceased hung above it and read scrolls eulogizing Dr. Sun. The term used to describe their action was, 祀, to sacrifice and it seemed to an outsider to be real worship. We gather, then, from the evidence that while the kotow is commonly used in worship by the Chinese, it is also used at other times and its use does not present conclusive proof that the act in question is real worship.

Other external forms are likewise indeterminate. The invocations that are used may imply divine attributes, and doubtless often do so, but they do not invariably carry this inference. They may be simply eulogies or reports to ancestors of what has happened to the family. The fact that they are highly emotional should not be forgotten when their real meaning is being determined. When appeal is made to ancestors for protection or for posterity, a religious attitude is indicated. The offerings which are presented may be used in worship, or may be interpreted as the necessary elements in a family feast in which the spirits share. Bowing does not always denote worship. In this connection, there is much discussion over the significance of the bowing which is done

before the portrait of Sun Yat-Sen in the Monday morning Memorial Services now regularly held all over China in his honor. Some say that this bowing before the portrait is equivalent to nothing more than reverence or politeness. It is simply like tipping one's hat or saluting the flag. There are others who are unable to see any difference between bowing to the tablet of Confucius and bowing before the portrait of Sun Yat-Sen, except that in the latter case it seems even more like idolatry, for a picture or representation is used in place of an inanimate tablet of wood. They insist that the outward form may have changed but the inward attitude is the same.

The fact that in English the expression "ancestor worship" is used to denote the rites performed in connection with the reverence shown to ancestors, is no proof that these rites are real worship. The terminology which has been applied may have been faulty or the verb "to worship" may be taken in its now obsolete meaning of "to treat with the reverence due to merit or worth; to respect; honor." ¹ This old meaning has persisted in the title "Your worship" used

¹ See definition of "to worship" in Webster's New International Dictionary.

when addressing a judge in the court room or others of rank or station. Similarly, the use of the Chinese term,

拜, is inconclusive, for it may mean "to honor, to reverence, to make obeisance to, to pay respects to", and "to visit" as well as "to worship" and these meanings shade into one another. The term is quite commonly employed to denote actions other than worship. Its use does not prove that the rites constitute real worship.

In order to discover the true import of ancestor worship it is necessary to examine into the motives, attitudes, and desires of those who keep up the ancient tradition.

Ancestor worship is continued largely because it is a tradition that has been handed down from the hoary and dignified past. With many, it is an unreasoned tradition. They have not determined to carry on the rites after a careful consideration of all of the arguments for and against such a course of action but have simply followed an innate, conservative instinct. The power of precedent has a binding force in China that must be experienced in order to be truly appreciated. When a foreigner newly arrived in China begins to give orders to his servants to do things in a certain way he is calmly met with the assertion that they

have not been done that way in the past and that usually settles the matter unless he is very persistent. Once a precedent has been set, it is extremely hard to break it or to replace it. This deference to established usage and conformity to stereotyped custom is carried to lengths undreamed of in even the most conservative of Western lands.

Another factor that makes for the continuance of ancestor worship is the universality of the practice. It is the popular thing to do and everyone does it. Those who fail to carry on the rites are charged with having ungratefully forgotten their origin. The blackest of all crimes is to be unfilial. Many times the performance of the ancestral rites, especially the burial rites, gratifies a secret desire for pompous display which meets with the approval of the neighbors. People live closer together in China than they do in Western countries and it is said that there can be no secrets in a village or along a city street in China. A man must have strong reasons indeed before he dares to be different from his neighbors in a matter which is so commonly observed. He probably asks himself why he should not conform to type and continue the rites. This line of reasoning is unusually forceful in China where conformity

to social standards is more compulsory than in the West and where the family is the fundamental unit instead of the individual. If a man does not carry on the tradition he is in public disfavor and "loses face". Many who are superstitious, think that it is extremely unlucky to let the worship lapse and even if a man does not share in this belief, his neighbors may be governed by it and can make it extremely unpleasant for him if he dares to neglect the rites and is thus held to be responsible for some piece of misfortune which visits the neighborhood. It is safe to say that over fifty per cent of the people do not know the reasons for the custom but continue its practice, as a matter of course, without even troubling to inquire as to why they do it. They act without any clear, conscious motive.

Others do it simply from force of habit. It has been practiced in the past and it must be continued, not because it is rationally approved of, but because the bad habit is so firmly fixed that there is a lack of the motive power necessary to break with it. The ordinary, uneducated man does it because his father did it before him and taught him to do it and his father's word is, to him, law. The son having once promised his father that he would faithfully continue

the practice would lose his self-respect if he broke his promise. Only the educated know the real meaning of the tradition and yet even these are often motivated by desires and fears, which, although not rationalized and articulated, are none the less real.

An analysis of the motives prompting ancestor worship, the accompanying emotions, and the concomitant beliefs with regard to the dead is given in the following table:

MOTIVE	EMOTIONS INVOLVED	DEAD REGARDED AS
Commemoration.	Love, gratitude, desire to honor the dead.	Figures of the past existing only in the memory.
Propitiation.	Fear.	Present and requiring respectful attention.
Reciprocal assistance between living and dead.	Pity or desire for blessing.	Hungry and needing food, poor and in need of money, or powerful and able to bless.
Conservation of the family and the clan.	Desire for communion, pride in family or clan.	Figures of the past existing only in the memory or, more commonly, as actually present.
Inculcation of the familist theory of social relationships.	Filial piety, reverence, respect.	Figures of the past existing only in the memory or else as actually present.

Perhaps the primary motive in ancestor worship is that of remembrance. There are some Chinese scholars who do not believe in the existence of spirits. They hold the view that the soul ceases to exist at death. Ancestral rites become simply a memorial. They deny the claim that the ancestral tablet may become the dwelling place of the spirit during the sacrifice. For example, it is said, "The wooden tablet in which the name, etc. of the dead ancestor is encarved is never regarded by the living man to be the residence of the dead ancestor, but it is only a symbol valued by the descendants, just as the cross is a symbol valued by Christians." ² Even among those who believe in a continued existence after death, the memorial view is commonly held. It is frequently said that common gratitude requires that a man reflect upon the source from which he sprang. In this memorial view, the dead are regarded as figures of the past existing only in the memory. The worship is of subjective and symbolical value only.

² China Tomorrow, Vol. I, Peiping, February 20, 1929, No. 4, article by Chen Shu Shen on "The Chinese Family System", p. 54.

Even in early days, opinions varied as to whether ancestors really came and enjoyed the sacrifices offered by descendants. In the Hsia dynasty, the , 明器 , ming ch'i sacrificial vessels were used and it was said that the dead do not enjoy the offerings presented to them. During the Yin dynasty, ordinary vessels were used and thus the superstition was fostered that the dead were on the same footing as the living. At the time of the Chou dynasty, half of the first and half of the second kind of vessels were used and it was said that the spirits come if one thinks that they do, and do not come, if one thinks that they do not come. 3

The principal emotions that are brought into play in connection with the commemorative motive are love, gratitude, and the desire to honor the dead. Even when it is granted that the spirits of the dead do not have any real existence, there still remains the obligation to remember the departed loved ones with affectionate and grateful hearts and to think of all that the present generation owes to them.

3 China Review, Vol. VII, article by Rev. John MacIntyre on "Jottings from the Book of Rites", p. 293.

Thanksgiving must be rendered for the heritage which has been bequeathed.

While it is doubtless true that the desire to propitiate the ancestral spirits has been over-emphasized by DeGroot and others, the fact remains that general testimony would indicate that this is at least as powerful a motive as any other. Fear is a concomitant of this desire and the belief is held that it is just as well to keep on good terms with the dead. This is a form of animism. The ghost element is prominent. This motive is selfish, for the principal desire is to propitiate the departed spirits, and thus avoid the curse which they might inflict, if they were not appeased. It is like taking out an insurance policy in order to ensure prosperity and avoid adversity and trouble. The Taoist services to the dead are deprecatory. They are inspired by a desire to avert evil rather than to live up to the ideals of filial piety. The propitiatory view of the meaning of ancestor worship is fostered by the priests in order to further their own mercenary aims as their aid must be sought in order to placate the angry spirits. How is it that one who loved his descendants on earth and was loved in return should come to be feared in the other world? The

answer to this question lies in the fact that the deceased is regarded as being able to protect the family against hostile forces, especially spirits. If the rites are performed, all goes well. If they are not performed, the spirit of the deceased may become angry just as the deceased was accustomed to be angry at any sign of neglect on the part of his descendants while he was still with them in this world and he may withdraw his protection.

Instead of love, fear is the principal emotion experienced. Propitiation involves a negative attitude while that of commemoration is positive. For the masses, the negative attitude seems to loom larger than the positive. There are more evils that are warded off than there are blessings that are obtained. The common people are so absorbed in making a living that they perform ancestor worship only when others do it or on festivals, anniversary, or memorial days. They carry on the rites only when it is necessary to do so in order to avoid trouble. One of the rites sometimes performed in Peking is the burning of spirit-world banknotes issued by the "Bank of Hades" or the "Bank of Hades and Heaven" which look exactly like real banknotes. (See Illustrations on pages 53 and 96). By means of these banknotes,



Photograph by the Author.

A CHRISTIAN GRAVE

Note absence of sacrificial
altar and incense urn.

fabulous sums can be transmitted to the spirit-world.

Dr. Arthur H. Smith pays tribute to the strength of this motive, "The true root of the Chinese practice of filial piety we believe to be a mixture of fear and self-love, two of the most powerful motives which can act on the human soul. The spirits must be worshipped on account of the power which they have for evil. From the Confucian point of view, it was the sagacious maxim of the Master, that 'to respect spiritual beings, but to keep aloof from them, may be called wisdom.' If the sacrifices are neglected the spirits will be angry. If the spirits are angry they will take revenge. It is better to worship the spirits by way of insurance. This appears to be a condensed statement of the Chinese theory of all forms of worship of the dead. As between the living, the process of reasoning is equally simple. Every son has performed his filial duties to his father, and demands the same from his own son. That is what children are for. Upon this point the popular mind is explicit. 'Trees are raised for shade, children are reared for old age.' Neither parents nor children are under any illusions upon this subject. 'If you have no children to foul the bed, you will have no one to burn paper at the

grave.' Each generation pays the debt which is exacted of it by the generation which preceded it, and in turn requires from the generation which comes after, full payment to the uttermost farthing. Thus is filial piety perpetuated from generation to generation, and from age to age." 4 The spirits of the dead are active in this form of animism. It is felt that they would be resentful of the neglect and unfaithfulness of their descendants, if the rites were not performed, and that, in such a case, they would undoubtedly bring ill-luck and catastrophe upon the living family. The spirits are regarded as real and as being in need of propitiation. The motive of propitiation assumes that the spirits of the deceased are actually present during the sacrifice and that they require respectful attention.

Another primitive and naïve attitude sometimes adopted is that there may be reciprocal assistance between the living and the dead. The dead may be regarded as hungry and needing food, as poor and needing money, or as powerful and able to bless the living. Transactions are held to be possible between the dead and the living. When the spirits are thought

4 A.H. Smith, *Chinese Characteristics*, pp. 184-185.

of as being able to bless, then there is a desire to receive their blessings. The blessings desired are material rather than spiritual. They include happiness, long life, a numerous posterity, wealth, and official position. The gods are worshipped for what they can give rather than for what they are. The happiness of the dead depends on the offerings to their spirits ⁵ and the welfare of the living depends on the happiness of the spirits of the dead ⁶ so that both parties are benefitted by a fair exchange. This "do ut des" form of commutative contract does not represent a high type of religious thinking but it is a typical religious attitude with the Chinese. It is a sound business principle but it has no place in a lofty religious faith. Some believe that the spirits are in need of food in the other world and naturally they wish to supply this need. Werner writes, "If we really believed that our departed loved ones were

⁵ For a confirmation of this assertion see L. Wiegner, *A History of the Religious Beliefs and Philosophical Opinions in China*, translated by E. C. Werner, pp. 119, 122.

⁶ For early examples of this ancient superstitious belief see L. Wiegner, *op. cit.* pp. 120, 121.

in need of food or clothing, we should do as the Chinese do. Only this week I read in a London paper of an English woman who habitually places food for the dead on her husband's grave." 7 Many apparently intelligent Chinese think that the spirits of their ancestors really enjoy the food which is set before them. This belief is the basis of sacrificial ceremonial. 8

This is a kind of animism. It is held by the Taoists that relief and deliverance must be given to the suffering or tortured spirits in order to save the offerers from the spite which might follow neglect or failure to do the utmost possible. Others look upon ancestors as being able to confer blessings. In times of stress they are called upon to help.

7 The Journal of the North China Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society, Volume LIX, 1928, article by E.T.C. Werner on "The Origin of the Chinese Priesthood", p. 199.

8 The New China Review, Vol. II, June 1920, No. 3, article by E.T.C. Werner on "Reform in Chinese Mourning Rites" (which contains a translation of an original document by Dr. Hu Shih to which reference is here made), p. 233.

It is felt that they are really able to respond. There are many who aver that in this worship they actually come into contact with the deceased and ask them for aid, which they will give. Material blessings come from ancestors as long as they are in a good humor, but when they are offended, sickness and calamity are the result. The hopes of the family center round the tombs of their ancestors. The common belief is that if sacrifice is performed, blessing will follow, and if it is neglected, calamity will come. The blessings desired are happiness, posterity, wealth, and official rank. There is no trace of anything higher or less material than these. The dead depend upon the living for food, clothing, and money. The food is presented before the tablets or the graves and enjoyed by the spirits before being eaten by the family. Clothing is forwarded by means of paper imitations and money is burned as tin-foil. When the spirits have these essentials they are contented and happy but without them they are hungry, naked, and penniless and come back to punish those who have been guilty of neglecting them. DuBose observes, "Sickness and calamity deceased ancestors may bring, so they must be appeased, because those 'who are neglected by their living relatives become beggar spirits

in the world of darkness, and are forced, in order to secure even a wretched existence, to herd with the spirits of the multitudes who have died in war, at sea, of starvation, or in foreign countries.'"⁹ These rites would never have originated if it had not been felt that thereby the dead were actually helped and that they would therefore indirectly benefit the living. This motive has probably influenced men in China from the earliest times. It is further held that the spirits of ancestors possess only a conditional existence which is dependent upon the regular performance of their sacrifices by their descendants. This is one of the most objectionable parts of the cult. The idea is anti-Christian. Chutze, who dominated China's thought for so many centuries, taught this doctrine in the, 語類, Yu-lei.¹⁰ The dead are popularly supposed to depend upon the living for sustenance and care and are commonly regarded as actually present at the sacrifices. This probably does not often take the form of a conscious feeling but is usually an instinctive

⁹ DuBose, The Dragon, Image and Demon, pp. 80-81.

¹⁰ See Records of the China Centenary Missionary Conference, Held at Shanghai, 1907, report of the Committee on Ancestor Worship.

presupposition. The desire to supply the needs of ancestors is prompted by a sense of filial duty. There is sufficient evidence to prove that many others believe that ancestors exercise a providential care over their descendants. Prosperity may be secured by treating the spirits well.

On a higher intellectual level than the two motives just discussed is the one which is concerned with the conservation of the family and the clan. This is a little more sophisticated and not quite so naïve. The most prominent emotions are the desire for communion and the pride in family or clan. The rites are looked upon as a communion, a family feast and reunion, and a banquet with the spirits. "Many Chinese remember their fathers all the days of their lives. When they come to the graves their eyes are full of tears and their hearts are full of sadness; but afterwards they are joyful because they think that they have associated with their fathers' spirits. Their fathers seem to have revived in their memory." 11 The solidarity of the family and of the clan is stressed. The sacrifices show that the family circle cannot be broken by death. The family is indivisible.

11 From an essay by a Chinese middle school student.

The dead may be regarded as figures of the past existing only in the memory or, more commonly, as actually present. Ancestors are those from whom the family sprang, the authors of one's being, and glorious antecedents. The greatest expositor of Confucianism and commentator of the Classics was the Sung dynasty philosopher Chutze. He was the chief exponent of "modern Confucianism". It is said, "In regard to the existence of spirits, Chutze took the thoroughly orthodox attitude. 'Those who have neither form nor shade are difficult to apprehend. Do not bother about them. Devote yourself to the work of daily existence which calls for continual exertion. The Master has said, 'Not knowing how to serve men, how could we serve spirits?' 'How could we know about death, when we have not understood life?' 'He has said all there is to say about the matter.' 'Whether there are spiritual beings or not, it is not easy to tell in an off-hand way. Even if I told you, would you understand and believe? You should try to understand first the natural law; then this question will be cleared up by itself. Someone asked the Master about them. He replied, 'Honour the spirits, but leave them alone.' This is wisdom. Let us try to understand what ought to be understood, but leave what

we cannot understand aside for the present. When you have understood perfectly the principles of daily life, you will naturally perceive the law about spiritual beings.' (Chutze on Spirits, Vol. LI).

"But Chutze did try to explain in a materialistic way the existence of spirits, especially ancestral spirits, as the Worship of Ancestors called for. (Chutze on Ancestral Worship. Vol. I). At death, the breath leaves the body and is scattered and mingles with the universal air. But it is capable of coming together again at the time of ancestral worship, on the law that the like responds to the like. That is, the descendants who conduct the worship have the same breath in them that once animated their ancestors. When the descendants in sincerity and concentration of spirit beckon the ancestral spirit to return to the house, on such occasions the scattered spirit is capable of assembling again and returning. However, this 'reformation' of the scattered spirit into unity is only temporary, being held together only by the intense concentration of the worshiper's mind during the worship. And so it is impossible for the ancestral spirit to unite and reincarnate itself in a body and thus have a second life, such as the Buddhists teach. Thus Chutze

tried to explain ancestor worship. His explanation undoubtedly is the one accepted and current today." 12 The occasions when ancestral rites are performed are grand family reunions. The living worship the dead and the dead bless the living. The dead and the living eat and drink together around the festive board. The desire to share with or have communion with the being who is worshipped is an old idea in sacrifice. In ancient times, sacrifices were thought of by the Jews as affording an opportunity for communion with the divine. When Abraham made a covenant with God, the offerings were divided and the two contracting parties passed between them.

The communion feature of sacrifice is prominent in sacrificial worship among many peoples. Some have held that this is the dominant conception in Chinese ancestral worship. The medium by which this intercourse between the living and the dead is effected is the ancestral tablet. It is not a fetish but it is more than a mere memorial. As a matter of fact, it is supposed to be the resting place of the spirit

12 Y.Y.Tsu, Chapter 4 on "The Confucian God-Idea" in China Today Through Chinese Eyes by T.T.Lew and others, pp. 78-80.

during the sacrificial service. The Chinese term used to denote the tablet, 神主, shen chu really means the spirit's abode and does not mean divine lord as some might translate it. The spirit banquet expresses the sense of family unity and continuity. It shows that the family ties are not broken by death. Many who deny that ancestor worship is to be interpreted realistically, yet regard it as valuable symbolically or conventionally. They may hold that the offerings are not efficacious as far as the spirits are concerned but that they have subjective value for the offerer. The dead and the living are to be regarded as but links in an endless family chain. By means of these rites the nearness of the ancestral spirits and their continued interest in present day affairs is brought home to the new generation. There is a desire to retain a respectful contact with the venerable deceased. There is a fundamental feeling that it is a duty that is owed. This prompts the sacrifices of the sophisticated as well as those of the simple.

Closely allied with the motive which has just been mentioned is the desire for the inculcation of the familist theory of social relationships. The sacrifices serve an educational purpose and provide valuable expression lessons



Photograph by C. C. Steinbeck.

CHING MING SERVICE AT A
CHRISTIAN CEMETERY, PEKING.

(See text on page 281).

for the edification of the young. They present an excellent opportunity to impress great truths and especially to teach an individual the place he should occupy in the family and in society. The principal emotions aroused are filial piety, reverence, and respect. The younger generation observing the effort of the older generation to show gratitude and obedience to ancestors is led to acquire the habit of showing kindness and respect to elders both inside and outside the family. In this way filial piety, the universal human sense of gratitude for the source of life, which differentiates a man from an animal, is given adequate expression. Ancestor worship is regarded by some as the means to be used to the end that filial piety may be perpetuated. 13 The figures of the past may be thought of as existing only in the memory or as being actually present. The virtues of ancestors live again in their descendants and therefore they must strive to be worthy. The rites are acts of filial homage and affection. Ancestors are held up as examples of virtuous living

13 China Tomorrow, Vol. I, No. 4, Peiping, February 20, 1929, article by Chen Shu Shen on "The Chinese Family System", p. 54.

and hence as worthy of great honor. Everything is owed to them. They established the line in which the offerers have grown up. They influenced the character of their descendants and of the society in which they moved and gave it its set or form. This attitude of reverence is more or less present at every sacrifice though the offerer may not be consciously aware of the fact.

According to some, reverence is the fundamental idea in ancestral worship. It is not thought that the ancestors actually enjoy the offerings presented in a literal way but, symbolically, they represent the leal love offerings of the loyal hearts of their descendants. It is felt to be inconsistent to eat good food and rejoice without pausing to think of one's forebears, and at least indicating this thought by a gesture of good will. If the ancestor was particularly fond of a certain kind of food or flower, it is but natural that they be placed before his tablet so that the subjective feelings of the offerer may be given expression and, in some cases, so that the spirit of the deceased may really enjoy the offerings. This method of teaching reverence to the younger generation by the power of example is very effective. The proper attitude towards the great personages

of the past and one's proper place in society is concretely illustrated and indelibly impressed upon young minds. Reverence is shown for ancestors like reverence is shown for the national flag. A great virtue is shown in action. Filial piety is the foremost of the great virtues in Chinese morality and its practice does not stop with the grave. Its importance is rather enhanced by the mystery which surrounds the spirit of the deceased, who has passed out of the realm of the known into the shadowy existence of the other world, and who may possess powers and influence greater than he possessed in life. The record of one's ancestors is even more important than one's own record. If one is eminently successful and becomes famous or wealthy by philanthropic virtues or learning, one's ancestors are thereby ennobled. If, on the other hand, one is defeated in the game of life, the fault lies not with the ancestors but with one's own lack of virtue. These and many other lessons must be taught to the young. The Golden Age is in the past. It is the duty of the present generation to preserve intact the priceless heritage that is handed down to it. With Confucius, this undoubtedly loomed as one of the greatest reasons for the continuance of the rites and the same may be said of

innumerable hosts of his fellow countrymen who were influenced by his example and teachings. One's place in the social order was taught better by this simple method than by abstract reasoning. The little child could understand this lesson and it made an indelible imprint upon his growing mind. Ancestral rites had great educational possibilities. A better method for the accomplishment of their purpose cannot be conceived.

With most people there is a mixture of these motives, some of them conscious and others buried in the subliminal state. Their relative importance naturally varies with individuals. In certain cases, some of the motives are practically absent while others are correspondingly emphasized. It is impossible to list the five motives that have been mentioned in any inflexible order of importance. There is naturally room for divergence of opinion as to their relative strength. S.J.Chuan, speaking of the uneducated, states that although there are not wanting those who keep up the practice out of a sense of respect, or affection, or for the sake of tradition, the predominant motive is mercenary and superstitious. 14

14 Chinese Recorder, April, 1928, "Present-Day Attitude Towards 'Ancestor Worship', a Symposium", S.J.Chuan, p.230.

The Committee on Ancestor Worship of the Centenary Missionary Conference held at Shanghai in 1907 reported that the motives might be arranged in the following order of their importance: 1) affection, 2) filial piety, 3) fear (the ghost element), this includes also the reciprocal assistance idea which I have classified separately, 4) solidarity of the family and clan. This arrangement is probably as good as any that might be made, if it is clearly understood that with the ignorant and the superstitious, the motive of fear takes first place.

The motives of commemoration, the conservation of the family and the clan, and the inculcation of the familist theory of social relationships are of value when purged of excesses, such as the belief that the spirits are actually present, and when separated from the dead conservatism which is the mortal foe of all progress. It may readily be admitted that ancestral rites do not constitute worship if these are the only motives, and if the whole is regarded as of symbolic rather than realistic, objective value to the spirits. Taking worship to mean the paying of divine honors, it is clear that when the motives of propitiation and of the desire for reciprocal assistance between the living and the

dead enter in, the rites become tinged with animism and must be regarded as real worship. These motives are both selfish. In addition, they personify the dead as deities and credit them with powers greater than they possessed while alive. They are based on erroneous teaching and gross misconceptions and are founded on superstition. It is these elements that are objectionable in ancestor worship. Reverence for ancestors becomes worship when it consists of rites performed in the presence of those who are regarded as deities.

The rites probably did not amount to real worship in the case of Confucius because the religious ideas were lacking in his mind. He stressed sincerity and he worshipped the spirits "as if" they were present and thus he adopted an ambiguous attitude which has often been misinterpreted by the ignorant. He said, "Honour the spirits but leave them alone." He wished to continue the rites because of their social value, commemorative aspect, and educational value. He warned against excesses and rejected the idea that the spirits were to be feared or that they might receive help from the living or bless them in return. However, he made the fatal mistake of failing to be as explicit as he should

have been on this point. It is impossible to say definitely whether or not Confucius really doubted the existence of the spirits, but indications are that he did not have any doubt on this point, although he probably did not believe that they had superhuman powers and influence. At any rate, he did not deny their existence, and so ignorant people have been held in the grip of superstition which they have felt was not inconsistent with the attitude and teaching of Confucius. He did not feel sure enough of his position to remove all of the spiritualistic conceptions. He said that he knew little about the spirits and he adopted an agnostic attitude which has wrought untold harm by opening the door for the admission of superstition.

This discrepancy between theory and practice, between the views of the scholars and the practices and beliefs of the common people doubtless antedates Confucius. He did not contribute anything towards the removal of the condition. It has continued to exist through the centuries since his time. Some later Confucian scholars denied the existence of spirits and the Emperor K'ang Hsi was undoubtedly sincere in declaring that, for scholarly men like himself, the rites had no religious significance. However, the great difference

between theory and practice remains. A few intellectual and classically educated Chinese and certain foreigners who are in sympathy with their thought, examining ancestral worship from the standpoint of the Classical teaching on which it is built (for example the Li Ki or Book of Ceremonies), and inquiring into the reasons for the different rites hold that they are purely commemorative in nature. However, the generalization that ancestral rites are carried on simply as a memorial by scholars while the common people regard them as religious acts needs to be qualified. As a general proposition it contains much truth but it must not be interpreted too literally nor stressed too strongly. The attitude of the scientifically educated towards ancestor worship is different but many continue the tradition even after the rites have lost their first significance. They understand the real meaning of the tradition and they are familiar with the teaching on which it is based. The study of the Classics results in a very different verdict as to the meaning of ancestor worship from that arrived at by an observation of the masses. Scholars say that ancestors are not gods to be propitiated in order to secure blessings or to avert disasters and they deny that they possess powers

or privileges that they did not have when alive. It is claimed that they can bless or punish only in strict accordance with the moral law. Evil may overtake one who neglects ancestral rites, just as it may overtake one who neglects living parents, but this is simply the operation of the moral law, and is not to be interpreted as due to the individual action of an indignant spirit. Ancestor worship, as practiced by the masses, is mixed with animism. At the animistic level, religion involves a belief in spirits who are beyond man's control and who must be propitiated to bring on good and avoid evil results. Rites which are for the purpose of averting evil and obtaining good, indicate real worship. A return is expected for the sacrifice offered. The transaction is in the nature of a quid pro quo. In popular ancestor worship this conception is dominant. However, the distinctive feature of the worship is filial piety and this element differentiates it from all other cults. At one extreme are the intellectuals who regard the rites as a conventional memorial, and who say that they do not imply any belief in superhuman powers possessed by the deceased or even in the existence of the deceased. At the other extreme are the masses, by whom the rites are performed with

motives and desires similar to those which are found in the service of gods and spirits. There are innumerable gradations and variations in between these two extremes, depending upon the individual. The motive may be selfish or unselfish, interested or disinterested, and may be prompted by love or fear. There may be an element of religion in the most formal and an element of filial piety in even the purest worship. The power of conformity to custom which is so potent in Chinese life is felt by all. The paper read by Dr. Yates at the General Conference of the Protestant Missionaries in China at Shanghai in 1877 described the mass of superstitious practices that are connected with ancestral worship in the case of the common people. The opinions of the educated are of special importance in China, because there they have been the leaders of the community far more than in any other country. Dubs summarizes the attitude of Confucian scholars in these words, "Thus ancestor worship ceased to be idolatrous or even a religious practice since it was performed without any thought of dealing with unseen powers, and the intelligent Confucian could retain his intellectual honesty and still perform the venerated practices of worship. Hsüntze brought to its full fruition

the process of reinterpretation of the ritual which had been begun by Confucius. Burial ceremonies and the rites of worship became purely non-religious performances for those who adopted Hsüntze's interpretation. The same was true of the worship of Heaven (which became one form of ancestor worship) and of the worship of Confucius. Consequently we are not surprised that the Emperor K'ang-hsi should have informed the Jesuits that ancestor worship was not a religious rite; for him, as for other intelligent Confucians, that was literally true.

"The question naturally arises in our minds, how far has this interpretation of ancestor worship been held by the Chinese? It is too philosophical to be understood by the uneducated-but no uneducated person could be a Confucian. Even for the Confucians the superstitious attitude of the Doctrine of the Mean was always there. Yet those who studied any more than the bare minimum of the Classics-and their number included all who passed the examinations-found the interpretation of Hsüntze in their studies, and it must have made a deep impression. That such was the case we know from the pronouncement of K'ang-hsi. Thus we find that for many Confucians, and among that number we must include the most

intelligent of them,ancestor-worship was neither idolatrous nor worship,and this is a fact that we must recognize in our dealings with educated Chinese today." 15

K'ang Hsi's opinion might be true for men of cultivation like himself but it was not true for the mass of the people. The same difference in attitude might be noticed between a Brazilian gentleman in the presence of the images of the saints in the church and a Brazilian peasant under the same circumstances. To the former,it would not seem like worship,but the latter would not make the distinction.

T.M.Van,who received two classical degrees in the old Imperial examinations and who is a Christian scholar,gives this interpretation of the meaning of ancestor worship,"The basic ideal is to be found here-namely,serving the dead as you would serve the living. So that if men cannot forget their ancestors,that means that down in their hearts their ancestors are still alive. Knowing that living people must have houses to live in,ancestors also must be furnished with temples,halls or family niches. Since living persons must

15 Chinese Recorder,August,1927,article by H.H.Dubs on "The Confucian Attitude to the Worship of Ancestors",pp.504-505.

eat and drink,so ancestors also must have vegetables,wines, etc. at different times and festivals. Thus the ancestral offerings are ethical rather than religious.

"Two more points must be noted in this connection. First,three days previous to the ancestral offerings one must fast,make one's heart pure by thinking exclusively about how his ancestors acted when alive. One must visualize in his own mind's eye the entire personality of his ancestor before he can really offer sacrifice to him. Second,Confucius said that offerings should be made to ancestors as if they were present. These offerings must be made in the very presence of the ancestors. These two points,namely,fasting and mental visualization or communion look very much like religious performances. Ancestor worship may,therefore,be called a form of ethical religion." 16

Theory and practice differ. On theoretical grounds,by quoting the Classics,it may be proved that ancestor worship is simply ethical but on practical grounds,it is found to be worship in many cases. The growing materialism and atheism among the student class is affecting the fundamental

16 Chinese Recorder, April, 1928, "Present-Day Attitude Towards 'Ancestor Worship', a Symposium", T.M. Van, pp. 228-229.

interpretation of the meaning of ancestor worship in intellectual circles. Old scholars say that ancestor worship is the "bond of the social order". Some of the new scholars say that it is all right for the common people but smacks too much of ancient cult and gross superstition to be carried on by enlightened men. The old literary class are the strongest advocates of ancestor worship. They have money and are able to keep it up in grand style. They are the class from whom the officials have usually been drawn. They are the cultured families, the scholarly aristocracy, if such it may be called, or the élite of society. They are the strongest advocates of the necessity of keeping up the old traditions, which have made them what they are.

Is ancestor worship real worship? Is it idolatry? Does it constitute a religion? There has been much discussion of these questions particularly by missionaries and sometimes by the Chinese themselves. It is significant that there have been very few Chinese who have denounced ancestor worship in print. Such a course of action would require enormous courage. However, many Chinese pastors have preached against it. How strong is each motive? Are divine honors paid to the deceased? Obviously no categorical answer can be given

to these questions that will fit every case. However, certain definite statements, properly qualified, can and should be made. Under certain circumstances, it is undoubtedly worship. For the simple minded and for those who try to do what is right (the conscientious—such as those who belong to secret ethical societies), it may be worship. When blessings are expected an element of worship is introduced. In general, the rites become worship when ancestors are regarded as supernatural beings. Without a belief in the existence of the soul, ancestor worship is simply an empty form devoid of any meaning that appeals to the masses. It can then be carried on only for the benefit of the living, as a kind of figure of speech which may have a certain amount of subjective value. As a matter of fact, it is continued by great numbers of people because it meets a religious need. Man is incurably religious and this is the only religion that millions of people in China have. If ancestor worship contained no religious elements, it would be difficult to explain how it has survived among the masses who do not comprehend its rationale. Although it is a low form of religion, it is none the less real. Most authorities admit that ancestor worship may be worship in the real sense and that it must

be regarded as a form of religion. It is connected with the hope of reward and the fear of punishment. Others say plainly that it is "idolatry". Many Chinese say that, at times, it is true worship. Why, then, should foreigners who are more or less ignorant of Chinese life and thought discuss it further? Chinese Christians feel that they should give up certain practices in connection with ancestor worship. There is a difference between reverence, which results in a proper tendance of the dead, and worship. The attitude of the offerer may not be that of a worshipper at all, but when it does rise to that height the rites become true worship. The crux of the matter is to be found in the attitude of the performer of the ceremonies. The argument from analogy is strong. The rites before the tablets are similar to those in the temples which house the tablets of Confucius and his most noted disciples, and he was canonized and recognized as one of the authorized objects of divine worship by the Manchu Emperors. The rites are similar to those that are carried out before idols in temples. The incense used is the same kind and the bowing, etc. is done in a similar manner. Something is expected in return from the idols in the temples and ancestor worship is also not always purely altruistic. It is hard to

refute this argument. Its strength is undeniable. The similarity is too striking to be lightly dismissed or overlooked. The motive of fear is as strong or stronger than the others with the majority of people.

CHAPTER X

BENEFICIAL RESULTS OF ANCESTOR WORSHIP

Ancestor worship has had many beneficial results. Some of the more outstanding values for which it is responsible are mentioned in the following pages.

I. Moral or ethical values.

There is a positive value obtained from the remembrance of one's ancestors and the effort to emulate their glorious deeds and virtuous lives. Just as the desire to commemorate is a prominent impelling motive, so also the beneficial result obtained therefrom is of great value. The gratitude felt to great and worthy men who have left good examples for their descendants to follow has an ennobling effect. The resulting desire, which prompts men to share the glorious deeds of their forefathers and to further enhance the good name of the family by living honorably, is one which has a good moral effect. It is a good motive which prompts men to desire to remember their parents and to think again of the moral teaching which they imparted both by precept and example. Much of the motive force supporting national morality in China is

derived from ancestor worship. In fact, this desire to honor ancestors is the most powerful ethical force in the land. Who can fully appreciate the feelings that must surge through the whole being of a man as he stands before his ancestral tablets and thinks of the high standard which he must maintain? He feels amply rewarded for the moral struggle through which he may have passed when he realizes that his conduct has not been unworthy of the family tradition. The contemplation of the worthy deeds of one's forbears cannot fail to inspire one to maintain the high standard which has been set. Inevitably it induces a desire to reflect credit upon one's ancestors. It is well for men not to forget that they owe their origin and their inheritance to those who have labored before them and passed on. China has had a comparatively high standard of morality and has maintained an unbroken existence for many centuries. There must be some adequate reason for this continued existence. It is to be found in filial piety. There is something mysteriously strong in it. Ancestor worship reënforces and strengthens filial piety. The virtues of one's ancestors live in one and therefore one must strive to be worthy. With every man who is capable of the sentiment

of self-respect this must be a powerful motive. Every time he gathers with other members of the family or clan to worship the common ancestors he is reminded that these ancestors are his ancestors also. In a sense, the honor of the family is entrusted to his keeping. The consciousness of a moral heritage is of much more ethical value than a wealthy patrimony. Even though a man may be very poor from an economic viewpoint, yet he may be possessed of a rich inheritance. In order to maintain filial piety to the end, the torch must be passed on undimmed. In such circumstances, how can one fail to resolve to live worthily of the departed?

There is also a negative value. The commemoration of one's forefathers acts as a deterrent to check evil propensities. It has a certain value for moral restraint. By all means, one must not disgrace or dishonor one's ancestors. The greatest argument that can be used to persuade one to avoid a certain course of action is to urge that it will cause one to lose face before one's ancestors. Self-respect in the presence of one's forefathers must be maintained at any cost. There is a certain regulative effect, which deters from baseness, in the fact that one's life is lived in the presence of one's ancestors. It results in the wish to avoid

that which is unworthy of the family name. In this way, ancestor worship makes for honesty and for moral responsibility. A descendant must pay the debts of his ancestors. The family name and reputation must be upheld. As a social control and moral safeguard, ancestor worship is of great value. In this connection, Monroe states, "As the welfare of the dead is preserved by the righteous conduct of the living, society becomes sufficiently controlled. We in the West depend much for social control, for moral life, upon the idea of spiritual retribution for evil conduct; but the penalizing effects are limited to the individual. To the Chinese, the punishment of evil conduct is the suffering of the entire family group. This dependence of the welfare of ancestors upon the moral conduct of the living is what has given such importance to the very minute regulation of conduct by means of meticulous rites. Even Confucius, who was little interested in speculation concerning the dead or the spirit world, yet could emphasize, as a fundamental principle, 'Take no step, speak no word, contrary to the rites.'

"This ancestor worship, which made the welfare of departed generations depend upon the filial piety, the prudence, the upright conduct of the living, has done much to produce the

thrift, the practical efficiency, the industry, the everyday virtue of the Chinese. There exists a constant check upon conduct, such as cannot exist when the penalties are purely personal." ¹ An example of the effect of this consideration is furnished by the attitude of the Chinese towards their bodies. In the Classics it is taught that the body is received perfect from parents and that it must be kept in that condition. If any member of the body is missing when a person dies and goes into the other world, reflection is cast upon his ancestors. Hence men are led to believe that it is their duty not to expose their bodies to unnecessary danger. Great vengeance may be reaped upon an enemy or a criminal by mutilating his body and thus dishonoring his ancestors. There are many who believe that their ancestors are able to punish them if they do evil and this also has a salutary effect. The ethical values of ancestor worship are pronounced. T.M. Van writes, "The real benefit of Ancestor Worship is found in its ethical values. A classical saying has it, 'All things come from Heaven (or God); man comes from the ancestors.' So Ancestor Worship, because of its importance, has made the

¹ Monroe, China: a Nation in Evolution, p. 88

Chinese people grateful to their forefathers, thus indirectly making them a grateful race. Mo-Tse also had this attitude. He said that Heaven loves men and ancestors love their children. His doctrine of mutual love is based on these two concepts. The reason why the moral standards of the Chinese are kept up is their respect for Heaven and their love for their ancestors. This is the Chinese religion-to respect Heaven and love the ancestors." 2 Those who are guilty of infamous crimes may be excommunicated from the family. This terrible threat has a tremendous influence.

Hsuntze claimed that ancestor worship, as an educative factor, trains, directs, and satisfies human emotions. His interpretation of ancestor worship as something which provided an outlet for the emotions and was of value only for the living has already been noted. Ancestor worship furnishes ethical instruction by teaching obedience, gratitude, love, reverence, respect, filial piety, and other virtues-not as abstract principles but as living emotions. The method used is in strict accord with the teaching of modern pedagogy.

2 Chinese Recorder, April, 1928, "Present-Day Attitude Towards 'Ancestor Worship'. A Symposium," T.M. Van, p. 229.

Chinese children learn these lessons by impression and expression. The solemn rites make an early and lasting impression on their tender minds and before they are able to rationalize on the subject they join in the ceremonies. Both directly and indirectly the importance of these fundamental attitudes is impressed upon them. Mental assent is translated into fixed habits. As a Chinese boy put it, "Chinese children automatically obey, honor and remember their parents."

II. Social values.

Chief among the social values of ancestor worship may be mentioned its conservation of the social structure including the family and the clan. It has been the bond holding the family together and giving tranquillity and unity to the nation. Ancestor worship has been the greatest single factor in the production of the social solidarity so characteristic of China. It has united the family and clan and promoted the spirit of mutual helpfulness. It has kept society together. It has been the cement that has held China intact. It has made for social continuity not only between the different parts of the nation but also between the present and the past generations. Ancestor worship has had a strong stabilizing effect upon society. It has been a gyroscopic

force that has prevented radical and sudden religious, political, and social changes and violent revolutions. Time and again it has caused men to revert to the Golden Mean. It has forced changes to be confined, in most cases, to the slow process of gradual evolution. Other countries might try all kinds of experiments in an attempt to make progress. China was content to go slowly and to follow in the footsteps of the ancients. Up to a certain point, this is a virtue and beyond that point it becomes a vice. Hence these same causes have also had a bad effect. The social side of ancestor worship is one of its most attractive and pleasant features. The occasion of ancestral worship calls for a family gathering. After the rites are over, the members of the family and relatives partake of the feast and enjoy the family reunion. The clan temple is the social center of the clan life. The occasions which call the clan or the family together at the domestic altar, the clan temple, or the graves are happy times of fellowship. They provide for family gatherings such as are common in Christian homes at Christmas or New Year. The ties of kinship are kept fresh and strong. Sympathy for members of the same blood is fostered and encouraged. The individual is taught that he is but a cog in a machine and

that he must be socially minded and must act in a social way because his actions all affect his loved ones. Life in the large families which have been one outcome of ancestor worship, has served to prepare children for social living in a populous and crowded land. They learn that "live and let live" is the best policy and that tolerance pays handsome dividends. The rights of individuals must be definitely subordinated to the greater good of the social group. The welfare and financial strength of the group is sought rather than the self-enlargement of the individual. It is important to live worthily of one's ancestors and pleasure in this life is not the chief end of man. It strengthens the ties of family life by linking the members around a common altar. It restrains the anti-social activities of individuals towards one another by providing a common bond which encourages them to compose their differences in an amicable manner. Ancestor worship has a harmonizing influence. The gathering of the family or clan at a burial or for the ancestral rites may come at a time when there is friction between different factions and may cause a suspension of hostilities. Ancestor worship does much to foster a spirit of mutual help and consideration in the emergencies of life. In this connection,

it is said,"The foundation of the Chinese family lies in domestic communism. The family property is for all. Any member who has an income must contribute a lion's share of it to the support of the whole family and of course when he has no income he has the right to benefit for the time being from the contribution of some other member. The individual works for the whole family,not for himself. Thus cooperation and mutual help go hand in hand,obviating the ruthlessness and tragedy of helpless struggle for existence." 3 It not infrequently happens that many people have to be carried along by the family when they are unable to support themselves. Professor Kulp,in his survey of Phoenix Village, found that half of the people in the village lived under poor economic conditions and depended upon the familist organization for maintenance. 4 The endowment of the clan temple helps the members of the clan who are very poor to defray funeral expenses,wedding expenses,and,in case of great need,even living expenses. Special provision is made for

3 China Tomorrow,Vol.I,No.4,Peiping,February 20,1929,article by Chen Shu Shen on "The Chinese Family System",p.56.

4 D.H.Kulp,Country Life in South China,p.xxiii.

the care of the aged, widows, and cripples. Ancestor worship is distinctively social and in this way is well-suited to the needs of a large body of peace-loving people. It has helped to maintain the family by furnishing the occasion for the worship which keeps the family together. Réville correctly observes, "La mort est un phénomène aussi général, aussi constant, que le retour de la nuit après le jour ou de l'hiver après l'été. De plus, le culte des ancêtres est éminemment propre à maintenir le lien de la famille comme unité collective distincte, et c'est lui qui a consolidé la famille chinoise que d'autres facteurs tels que la polygamie, la condition abaissée de la femme et de l'épouse, auraient pu facilement réduire à un minimum de solidarité. Or l'instinct civilisateur était d'accord avec le maintien de la famille à travers les âges. C'est au fond la force du lien familial qui a fait celle de la nation entière et qui a procuré cette ténacité, cette dureté de vie dont nous avons constaté la merveilleuse puissance. Remarquons à ce propos ce trait qui est à l'honneur de la religion chinoise." 5 Thus ancestor worship has helped to preserve the family. It tends

5 A. Réville, La Religion Chinoise, Vol. I, p. 121.

to keep the family together and gives to its members common interests and a common sanction for their ethical standards. If these are not lived up to, the family suffers. Ancestor worship encourages the careful preservation of family and clan records. This of value from an historical standpoint and it provides the basis for a wholesome family pride, when it is not carried to an extreme. Ancestor worship has thus benefitted the race by being of value to the fundamental social institution, the family. It has produced a family solidarity that is without parallel in the world.

what / Ancestor worship has been instrumental in the preservation of the nation through five thousand years of history, and indeed, it is not too much to say that it has been the chief factor in this process. China has outlived all other ancient civilizations. Greece and Rome have become history, but China is still much like she was before they appeared on the scene. There can be no doubt that ancestor worship served to deepen loyalty to the throne and made possible China's long continuance as an empire. One of its most fundamental teachings was that of unswerving loyalty to the Dragon Throne. It served as a sanction which equalled or surpassed in value the great forces of social control which

in Western countries are estimated in terms of laws and of government. Its worth as a form of social control cannot be measured and its value as a moral restraint could not be taken by a multitude of laws. Politically, it has acted as a safeguard. When ancestor worship was being discussed at the Missionary Conference held at Shanghai in 1890, Dr. Williamson said, "There can be no question but that these rites have had a beneficial effect on China. They have tended largely to consolidate and perpetuate the nation. The dynasty comes and goes, but the family remains from generation to generation, binding the people together.----- Had it not been for the system of filial piety and ancestral worship there would be no China now; only a medley of contending tribes and opposing nations. Again, these rites have kept up, in a very marked manner, the morality of the people, and keep it up still, so that with all its drawbacks, China presents, socially and morally, a very different aspect from all other non-Christian countries." 6 Ancestor worship resulted in

6 It must not be thought that Dr. Williamson gave his unqualified approval of ancestor worship. He continued, "At the same time I fully believe that this system is as to nine-tenths of it idolatry, and an error from top to bottom."

the reënforcing of transmitted commands and in the sanctioning of traditions which were not allowed to lapse. This helps to explain, in large measure, the great zeal of many of the Emperors for ancestor worship. They had been taught that it was their sacred duty to carry out the will of their ancestors. When one considers the defects of political organization, the scandalous graft and corruption which honeycombed the government, and the arbitrary manner in which governmental functions were performed, it is all the more remarkable that the Chinese nation should have continued for such a long time. Indirectly, this is a great tribute to the prime importance of filial piety. One of the factors that contributed, in so small measure, to the continued existence of the Chinese people was the fact that they maintained purity of blood. This, in turn, was largely due to ancestor worship which emphasized the necessity for examining into the ancestry of the prospective mate and, in this way, prevented intermarriage with other races.

In so far as it has exalted marriage and recognized it as a means to the great end of securing an heir, ancestor worship has been of value to China. The position of the legal wife has been elevated. DuBose remarks, "An indirect result

of ancestral worship has been to define and elevate the position of wife and mother. All the laws which could be framed for the protection of women would lack their force if she were not honoured in the household. As there can be only one 'illustrious consort' named on the tablet, there is of course only one wife acknowledged in the family-----.

This acknowledged parity of the mother with the father in the most sacred position in which she can be placed has done much to maintain the purity and right influence of woman amid all the degradations, pollutions, and moral weaknesses of heathenism.' " 7

III. Educational value.

Ancestor worship has been of value for the inculcation of the familist theory of social relationships. It has taught man his place in the scheme of things. Confucius was a great man for he made a rational system of ethics out of animism. He held that the most effective teaching is by the power of example. As the father of the household worships the ancestral tablets from time to time, he is observed by his small son, who says to himself that he must continue this worship when his father dies and he becomes the head of the family. The nature of the family and the necessity for its continuation is

7 DuBose, The Dragon, Image and Demon, p. 286.

taught, not out of books nor abstractly, but by the power of a concrete example which even the youngest can appreciate and understand. Children are taught the meaning of family relationships and ideas of mutual responsibility are instilled into their young minds. They are given practical instruction in civics. Comparing filial piety in China with what he saw in Australia, Hwuy-Ung wrote, "With us control is never relaxed; pretensions of children are never sanctioned. This is the excellent feature in ancestor worship. With us, the father has the functions of the priest and magistrate combined. Something of this would be of great advantage here."⁸ A respect for authority and social custom which is beneficial, and which constitutes the strong point in the national character, is fostered. Ideas of law and order are implanted in young minds.

IV. Religious values.

Ancestor worship has served to keep alive a faith in a future life. Its practice shows that the Chinese believe in immortality, but social immortality, rather than individual immortality, is emphasized. There must be this belief in order

⁸ Hwuy-Ung, A Chinaman's Opinion of Us and of His Own People, p. 99

to maintain the worship. Those who carry on the rites must believe that they are efficacious or they would never continue them. The clan is a unit of which both the dead and the living members are essential parts. In view of the Chinese tendency to skepticism, this belief in the continued existence of the soul after the death of the body is all the more remarkable. It is mixed with much superstition but nevertheless it furnishes a foundation upon which the Christian doctrine of immortality may build.

Ancestor worship has fostered reverence and filial devotion for living parents and for dead ancestors. This is one of the greatest virtues in the Chinese character and it is due to the doctrine of filial piety, of which ancestor worship is but one expression. The promise annexed to the Fifth Commandment has been fulfilled in the case of the Chinese because they have, in many cases, been truly filial and have observed the Commandment.

The rites are highly prized and often afford real consolation to the worshippers. This is all the more to be wondered at when it is remembered that in this religion there are no priests or bishops, no idols, no monks or monasteries, no processions, no flags, no sacred book, no Supreme Being, and

no supernatural element except the immortality of the soul. It is a very simple and direct form of religion.

There are certain religious values in ancestor worship that may be utilized and built upon by Christianity. Ancestor worship is often associated with a real affection for parents as well as for more remote ancestors. Upon this may be built a love for God, the Father of all. Love is one of the most powerful forces in the world. There are great possibilities here. Ancestor worship may result in a proper pride in the long stream of one's family history. Pride in the pioneer spirit and courageous, truth-seeking qualities of one's ancestors cannot but have an uplifting effect. The desire to maintain the family tradition and to uphold the high standard of excellence provides a most worthy motive. This pride must be tempered with humility however, for there are skeletons in the closet of every family which any careful search will disclose. A proper self-respect which is truly ennobling may be built upon this conception. Ancestor worship has benefitted the Chinese people because it has provided something in life that they might venerate. Whole-hearted veneration is of value. It brings with it a certain richness. It lifts a man out of himself and ties him

to something higher. In ancestor worship, it has been the veneration of a group of personalities rather than the veneration of an idea or of one person that has been fostered. This attitude provides the basis for the development of veneration for the Supreme Being who is over all. The attitude of worship which has been fostered by the performance of the ancestral rites can be the basis on which the Christian practice of worship may be built. The attitude of worship may be transferred from the venerated ancestor to the one God. Ancestor worship may be a primary step. It may serve to prepare one to understand higher things by fostering an attitude of mind which is animated by the spirit of worship. A transfer may be made of the content of the object which is worshipped. The true God may be substituted for the ancestors. The Christian conception of All Saints day may be substituted for the Chinese All Souls day. This would make a powerful appeal to the emotions of the Chinese.

CHAPTER XI

HARMFUL EFFECTS OF ANCESTOR WORSHIP

Ancestor worship opened the way to many abuses. Its harmful effects were serious and widespread. Some of its more baneful consequences should be noted.

I. Moral or ethical effects.

Respectful fear instead of affection often rules the family. After describing some of the benefits which were derived from ancestral worship, Hwuy-Ung continues, "But something not was there. Love and sympathy that draws heart to heart-that was wanting. The relation between father and son was respectful fear only; a carriage without wheels. Less good the relation between father and daughter. Men have fear that affection may diminish reverence, not? Fathers with us hide sentiment behind the wall of dignity and ceremony, as we conceal our homes from public view. The words of Meng (Mencius), how true, 'The great man is he who does not lose his child's heart.' This meaning that he is simple and natural in all his doings." ¹ A son regards his father with respectful

¹ Hwuy-Ung, *A Chinaman's Opinion of Us and of His Own People*, pp. 94-95.

fear but affection is often conspicuous by its absence. This is not the correct relation. Affection should rule the family.

There was the danger of so emphasizing the rites to be performed for the benefit of the ancestral spirits that men might be led to give more honor after death than before, and in fact this was the result. In many cases, a son was most unfilial during the lifetime of his parents, but if he carried out the proper rites after their decease, he was exonerated in the eyes of the public. This is not an uncommon occurrence in China to-day. It is much easier to honor parents after their death than during their lifetime. It does not cost as much in self-sacrifice. It is hard to obey a living parent who orders one to do something which one dislikes very much to do. It is much easier to be filial and obedient to parents after they have passed from the scene. This practice of giving flowers to the dead instead of to the living is found all over the world and is by no means confined to China. However, it was accentuated in China by the emphasis which was placed upon ancestor worship. It is meaningless when one who has not treated his ancestor properly when alive, attempts to please his spirit when he is dead. Such

ancestor worship is prompted by a fear of the dead spirit.

The family is emphasized so much at the expense of the individual that embezzlement is actually condoned as an act of filial piety, on the ground that the act of the culprit was prompted by a good motive. On his behalf, it is said that he did it in order to enrich his family and not for his own good. Thus evil is shielded by the cloak of respectability.

Confucius stressed family loyalty so far as to make it obligatory for each member to conceal the misconduct of every other member of the family. A passage in the Analects reads, "Confucius said, 'Among us, in our part of the country, those who are upright are different from this. The father conceals the misconduct of the son, and the son conceals the misconduct of the father. Uprightness is to be found in this.'" ² This is stretching the principle of family loyalty too far indeed. Such loyalty is subversive of good ethics.

One of the worst consequences of ancestor worship, for which however it was only indirectly responsible, was the introduction of the doctrines of feng-shui. They have been an intolerable burden to the Chinese people and have wrought

² The Chinese Classics, translated by James Legge, Vol. I, Confucian Analects, XIII, xviii, 2, p. 270.

untold harm to the country. The absurd doctrine that the fortunes of a family were determined by the location of an ancestor's tomb was introduced by Taoism. It was taught that an unfavorable location might restrict the free movements of the ancestral spirit and so anger it that it would avenge itself by visiting the family with a series of disasters, both financial and otherwise. A huge mass of superstitions grew up in this connection. The result was that the people were held in virtual slavery to quack magicians and charlatans. Since it was regarded as extremely dangerous and unlucky to disturb the various spirits of the forces of the elements of air, wind, water, etc. by digging in the ground, mining prospecting and operations were forbidden, and the great riches stored under the ground were left unexplored and unused. The building of railroads and new highways was opposed on the same grounds. This popular geomancy has the greatest hold upon the masses of the Chinese people. They think that the whole of nature is alive with influences for good and evil. Frequently large sums of money are squandered because of these enslaving beliefs. The task of determining the lucky time as well as the lucky site is also left to the feng-shui quacks. Coffins are often kept above ground for months until these

matters have been decided. Examples of this course of action are quite common.

II. Social effects.

Ancestor worship has resulted in a large, unchecked increase in the population. As Dr. Monroe has so aptly phrased it, it "keeps the population at the saturation point of existence".³ Since women cannot carry on the ancestral rites, the result has been an inordinate desire for sons and heirs to carry on the rites in behalf of their parents. It makes filial conduct consist in leaving male posterity. Mencius characterized sonlessness as the acme of unfilial conduct and the greatest of all crimes against parents.⁴ A man's most urgent duty is to be married and to raise up posterity who may carry on the ancestral rites down through the ages. For this reason, early marriages are arranged and millions of human beings are brought into the world, who because of overcrowded conditions and the fierce struggle for existence, are forced to eke out a meager living as best they can. It is not sufficient to

³ Monroe, *China; a Nation in Evolution*, p. 95.

⁴ *The Chinese Classics*, translated by James Legge, Vol. II, *The Works of Mencius*, IV, i, xxvi, p. 313.

have simply two or three sons. The more there are, the better, for, due to war or pestilence, some of them may not live to maturity. Fear thus holds the people. They are distressed lest they should fail to have descendants to sacrifice to their spirits. The dead depend upon the living. If posterity fails, all preceding generations must be left to suffer uncared for in the realm of the spirits. The inordinate desire for sons results in immorality by making the introduction of concubines a virtue.

The position of woman is lowered by ancestor worship. She can never take part in the sacrifices. She is regarded as of little value in herself. She is honored only when she fulfills her function and becomes the mother of sons. Male progeny are regarded as so important that the absence of sons in a family is recognized as a valid ground for divorce. Furthermore, such a condition necessitates the taking of one or more secondary wives or concubines. Polygamy and all of its string of related evils is fostered in this way. Immorality thus follows in the train of ancestor worship. Many women choose suicide as the simplest way out of the suffering they experience. Sons must be secured at all costs. Marriage is not regarded as a holy estate but simply as a means to

make provision for the carrying on of ancestor worship. The following appeared in a Chefoo newspaper, "The Chairman of the local Chamber of Commerce, Mr. Tsui Pao-sheng, is between forty and fifty years of age. He possesses a wife and a concubine but it is a cause of sorrow to him that he is without a son and heir. In order to remedy this, he contracted an alliance with a Miss Chang who was welcomed to his home on Wednesday, amidst the congratulations of his friends." 3 Near Peking, a man of over fifty, who had a daughter thirty years old, bought a girl of fifteen as a concubine, since he had no son. He was expelled from the church because of this action. Ancestor worship has led to the legalization of concubinage and its recognition as legitimate, and even essential, at times, in order to secure sons, maintain the family line, and provide for the continuance of the unending ancestral worship.

One result of ancestor worship is that girls are regarded as of little value. Since they marry out of the family and are not eligible to continue the ancestral rites, they are

3 Chefoo Daily News, Gleanings From the Local Press, Sept. 27, 1928.

naturally not esteemed as highly as boys. They are liabilities whereas boys are assets. Boys are the future supporters and continuators of the family and will perform the ancestral rites. Until recently, female infanticide has been by no means unknown. Even at the present time, in the average Chinese family, girls are not on an equal footing with boys. Girls who have the opportunity to obtain a complete education are unusually fortunate. They do not participate in social events as much as boys. Since they have married out of the family, they do not inherit patrimony after the death of either parent for the property of the family belongs to the ancestors and it must not be alienated. Girls and women are thus definitely subordinated to men and boys. Half of the population is denied the rights of domestic, social, and economic equality.

Ancestor worship sacrifices the personality of the younger generation on the altar of the service of the forefathers and the keeping of tradition. This influence is most pernicious. The young are dominated too much by the older people. Filial piety is carried to the extreme of servility and awe. A father is a god and his children are his slaves. Their individuality is sacrificed. A father has absolute

power over the life of his child. Hwuy-Ung criticizes this conception as follows,"It is barbarous that a father has power over the life of his child,against nature,and the rights of the State. The Master admitted that:'A youth is to be regarded with respect. How do we know that his future will not be equal to our present?' It might be greater. The obedience required of a son with us should not be that of a slave,but of one who freely yields it in a sense of justice and a feeling of affection. This is what Meng understood when he said,'Filial affection for parents is the working of benevolence.'" 4

Ancestor worship has acted as a check upon progress. By stressing the fact that any change was irreverent,it has been too much of a conserving force. The spirit of innovation and progress has been smothered. Stagnation has resulted. Youth has been taught to look backward to its forefathers rather than forward to the future and to its own posterity. The fortunes of ancestors have been the chief concerns of their descendants. This has helped to fossilize Chinese life

4 Hwuy-Ung,A Chinaman's Opinion of Us and of His Own People, p.97.

and to bind the future in the shackles of the past. It has effectively barred the way to progress and prevented the modernization of the nation. Any change from the ways of the ancients has been regarded as showing irreverence towards ancestors. The reasoning has been that their ways were better than modern ways can ever be, so why should modern men be disrespectful, and try to improve on what has been handed down to them. The result of this reasoning is only too apparent in the rigidity which has held China immovable while the world as a whole has been pressing forward. It made for an extreme conservatism and an abject slavery to the past. It preserved China in her ancient state so well that she made no progress for centuries. The living were held in subjection to the dead. It was taught that the body of gods in the other world were the possessors of the people in this world. The living were regarded as the property of the dead and the dead could do what they liked with the living. Instead of the people possessing the gods, the gods possessed the people. Such a conception limited liberty. In some respects it made men very foolish. It made possible the continuance of corruption in the Chinese Empire for hundreds of years because children were taught by their parents to

obey the commands of the Emperor as a part of filial piety, regardless of whether the commands were just or not. It discouraged new ventures. A Chinese writes, "Loyalty, sacrifice, care, love, for the family combine to demand from the members constant financial contribution and personal presence at home. The consequence is that the members of the family except the very ambitious and energetic ones, do not think very much of making adventures to a distant land or entering on enterprises on a big scale. This Chinese family defect or the force of domesticating and arresting individual development, enterprise, adventure and initiative accounts for the absence of great industrial enterprises in China." 5 Ancestor worship is the characteristic of an unprogressive people and, in its old form at least, it must be overthrown in order to pave the way for progress.

The economic waste of ancestor worship has a very baneful effect upon education and other worthy enterprises. Not so much per capita is spent upon ancestor worship, except for funeral expenses. According to the Chinese Maritime Customs,

5 China Tomorrow, Vol. I, No. 4, Peiping, February 20, 1929, article by Chen Shu Shen on "The Chinese Family System", pp. 55-56.

the joss stick (including joss stick powder) which has been imported into Chefoo for the last five years has only averaged about £ 287 a year (Haikwan taels 1,917). However, this is only one item in the expense, and to this would have to be added the cost of the wine poured out on the ground and the paper articles and money burned. The total would not be ex-
 8/L ~~orbitant~~ when computed on a per capita basis. A conservative estimate would place the maximum amount at one dollar per family per year. As there are 80,000,000 families in China, this would mean a total expenditure of approximately Mex. \$80,000,000.00 for a population of some 400,000,000. 6 It is funeral expenses which more often than not exceed the bounds of reason and plunge a family into debt from which they may not be able to emerge for months or even years. They almost invariably go beyond their means. Because of expensive funerals, rich people become poor and poor people become poorer. Financial ruin and sorrow often ensue. At the present time, The Nationalist government is striving to correct this

6 L.K.Tao, Secretary of the Social Research Department of The China Foundation for the Promotion of Education and Culture in a letter dated April 16, 1929.

evil practice which results in such extravagant waste.

Ancestor worship has condoned political and commercial nepotism on the ground that it was done out of loyalty to one's family and was hence admissible. Nepotism has been a great curse and a source of untold inefficiency in government and in commercial circles in China and an attempt is now being made in certain quarters to put a stop to the practice but it will not be easy to do so.

Ancestor worship has helped to over-emphasize the importance of the family. The individual was over-emphasized in the West. The family has been over-emphasized in China. It has been the primary social unit and the center of the interest and responsibility of the members of society. This emphasis has been at the expense of the individual.

Ancestor worship has fostered clannishness and localism. Local loyalty has been so absorbing that it has resulted in provincialism and narrowness of outlook and has hindered the development of a patriotic national spirit. Each clan has its own ancestral protectors and each clan is loyal to itself. Trivial causes lead to serious clashes between clans. The spirit of hostility towards rival clans is strengthened. The desire for revenge is nourished. The unity of the nation is

threatened. The course of family feuds has left a bloody trail throughout South China, where they are most common. Echoes have even been heard in the "tong" wars which have been waged among the Chinese who live in America.

III. Educational effect.

Ancestor worship had a harmful effect upon education. It contributed to the low position of woman, and it was this low position and the conception which accompanied it of woman's sphere and work, that prevented women from obtaining an education. Half of the nation was thus cut off from the enjoyment of educational advantages. The early marriages which ancestor worship called for, also interfered with the education of girls and, to a lesser extent, of boys. Frequently in a village that is without a school of any kind, a rich family will say that they cannot afford to contribute towards a school or send their children off to school, but at the same time they will spend more on ancestor worship than a school would cost. They do not attempt to save on ancestor worship.

IV. Religious effects.

It is in the realm of religion that the greatest defects of ancestor worship are to be found. There are two main types

of religion. The higher type seeks primarily for spiritual blessings and seeks God as an end in Himself, while the lower type seeks for material blessings such as food, clothing, money, health, posterity, success, etc. Ancestor worship is an example of this lower type of religion. It does not rise above seeking for merely worldly blessings and is selfish. It offers gifts which pertain only to this life. It makes a tremendous appeal but not on high grounds. It serves to foster practical materialism in China. It is thought to be the principal reason for the nation's prosperity and this is a great argument that is used to encourage its continuance. At least, it is thought to pay richly in dividends. It is a commercial type of religion. T.M. Van remarks in this connection, "The shortcomings of this ancient custom are many, of course. First, in Ancestor Worship there is the spirit of bargaining; the worshipper wants to get something in return. So the evil-doer tries to avoid the consequences of his evil-doing by making offerings to his ancestors. Second, according to the Chinese classics, one is not allowed to worship the ancestors of other people. In worshipping other people's ancestors, one is, therefore, prompted by other motives than love for one's own ancestor. The motive of trying to get something is found here again. Many people

do worship other people's ancestors." 7 This is not an exalted type of worship. In so far as ancestor worship holds out only the hope of obtaining material advantages and welfare, it is far from being an uplifting factor in Chinese life.

It is a fallacious and harmful view which holds that the spirits of the dead are dependent upon the living. It places a staggering burden upon the living and this burden is increased by the inventions of a priesthood which exists by playing upon the imagination of the masses. On this point, Monroe says, "The belief that not only does the soul live after death, but that it is dependent upon the living for all its needs of food, clothing, shelter, social respect and prestige (face), honor, prosperity, and happiness is—rather than the Hindu belief in the transmigration of souls—the outstanding addition made by ancestor worship or spirit worship to the Western belief in immortality; and it is this addition which makes it a burden to Chinese society and an impediment to progress. True, these human needs can be transferred to the disembodied spirits by spiritual means; that is, usually, by

7 Chinese Recorder, April, 1928, "Present-Day Attitude Towards 'Ancestor-Worship', a Symposium", T.M. Van, p. 229.

burning paper imitations of the objects needed so that the economic burden may be small. But it is not always so; and ritualistic religions have added heavy burdens and, at times, penalties to these.

"The neglected dead may wander as beggars in the spirit world, suffering both hardship and disease-but at times recompensing themselves by bringing similar evils upon the living. Either life or death under these circumstances may bring but misery or torture, to be avoided only by the reverent spirit of the descendants." 8

All ancestors must be worshipped indiscriminately. Good ancestors are not distinguished from bad ancestors. Notorious criminals and malefactors worship their ancestors and are in turn worshipped by their posterity. Moral distinctions are disregarded. Belief in a future retribution by a righteous God is destroyed. Rewards for the good are implied but no punishment is meted out to the bad. All Confucianists address their ancestors as "in heaven". It must be remembered, however, that even in Christian lands, the heroes of the past were not perfect and modern, critical biographers are proving that some

8 Monroe, China: a Nation in Evolution, p. 90.

of them were positively immoral.

The view of the future life which goes with ancestor worship is faulty and falls short of the Christian conception. It is loaded down with superstitions. Many animistic conceptions prevail. The spirits of the dead are feared, pitied, or entreated. The glorious hopes of meeting with loved ones in the other world and of a future resurrection are wanting. One superstitious belief is that ancestors are able to act as oracles and to advise their descendants as to the best course of action to pursue. By means of divination, they may give signs which are interpreted by their descendants as messages from the other world. In other cases, the influence of ancestors is regarded as being malevolent. Not only are the people oppressed with the fear of the spirits of their ancestors whom they regard as gods, but they also fear beggar spirits who, being neglected by their own descendants, are liable to harm others out of spite. Dr. Yates' paper read at the Missionary Conference held at Shanghai in 1877 described the Buddhist and Taoist superstitions which became connected with ancestor worship. The rapid growth of these superstitions may be ascribed to the fertile ground which had been prepared for them by the inadequate view which ancestor worship held of

the future life.

The strongest criticism that can be made of ancestor worship is that it leaves out God. It takes the place of the worship of the Supreme Being. It occupies the place in the heart and life which the worship of God should fill. It shuts God out of the life. The whole duty of man is confined to the five human relationships of society and nothing is said about man's duty to God. This is the most serious- indeed, the fatal-weakness in ancestor worship.

CHAPTER XII

ANCESTOR WORSHIP AND CHRISTIANITY

Roman Catholic missionaries were working in China long before any Protestant missionaries entered the country. Hence they were the first to come face to face with the problem of the attitude which Christianity should assume towards ancestor worship. The question was debated at great length at the time of the Rites Controversy which disturbed China in the 17th and 18th centuries. ¹ The first Roman Catholic missionaries were Jesuits. The Superior of the Mission and the most distinguished missionary in the group was Ricci. He allowed ancestral rites because they seemed to him similar in essence to the manifestations of the respect which disciples owed to their masters and children to their parents while living. He regarded them as mere homage in obedience to social

¹ The literature in connection with the Rites Controversy is voluminous. In the *Bibliotheca Sinica*, pages 870-923, Cordier lists 263 works in French, Italian, Spanish, English, and Latin dealing with various aspects of the question.

custom and saw therein nothing that was incompatible with Christianity. However, Buddhist and Taoist superstitions which had grown up in connection with ancestor worship were forbidden. Father Longobardi, who succeeded Ricci as Superior of the Mission, forbade ancestor worship. However, the greater part of the Jesuit missionaries of that time tolerated them except in the cases that had been forbidden by Ricci. This was the condition of affairs when, in 1631, the Dominicans entered China and began work in the province of Fukien. They disagreed thoroughly with the stand taken by the Jesuits. The archbishop of Manila, who supported the side of the Dominicans, carried the case to Pope Urban VIII in 1635 but later, being better informed, he dropped it in 1638.

The history of the controversy may be divided into two phases, each of which contained three decisions. I. 1) The first decision on September 12, 1645 was a decree of Propaganda issued by Pope Innocent VII forbidding the rites as described by the Dominican Morales who had appeared before him in 1643. 2) On March 23, 1656 a decree of the Holy Office was issued by Pope Alexander VII allowing the Chinese rites as set forth by Martini who had been sent to Rome from China by the Jesuits. 3) The first phase ended in a compromise

after the question had been raised again by the Dominican John Polanco. A new decree of the Holy Office was issued by Pope Clement IX declaring that the rites were to be prohibited or allowed according as they tallied with the reports of Morales or Martini.

II. 1) The Jesuits, in order to gain the upper hand and win favor with the Chinese, submitted the matter to the Emperor K'ang Hsi who declared on November 30, 1700 that the honors paid to ancestors were of a purely civil and political character with no religious significance and hence not contrary to the spirit and teaching of Christianity. In view of the rationalization of these rites advanced by Hsüntze and Chutze, it is not surprising to find that K'ang Hsi held to the traditional, orthodox position that had been time and again reiterated by the literati of the Confucian school. This was the view held, theoretically at least, by scholars generally. However, some of the missionaries felt that the practices of the common people and the theories of the scholars were at variance and on November 20, 1704 Pope Clement XI published a decree prohibiting certain honors hitherto allowed in worshipping ancestors because, as now practiced, they were tainted with superstition. In 1705 when the information reached the

Emperor, he ordered all missionaries to be furnished with a placet. This placet was to be granted only to those who approved the rites and all others were to be expelled from the country. Receiving in audience Bishop Maigrot, the Vicar-Apostolic of Fukien, in 1706, K'ang Hsi said, "'We honour Confucius as our master, thereby testifying our gratitude for the doctrine he has left us. We do not pray before the tablets of Confucius or of our ancestors for honour or happiness. These are the three points upon which you contend. If these opinions are not to your taste, consider that you must leave my empire.'" 2 The Dominicans and a few Franciscans refused to accept the placet and were forced to leave while the Jesuits accepted it but appealed to the Pope to withdraw the decree. Instead of withdrawing his decree, on March 19, 1715 the Pope published the Constitution Ex illa die upholding his decree of 1704 and requiring all missionaries in China to take an oath that they would obey it. The missionaries complied but the Chinese converts from the literary and official classes gave up their new faith rather than part

2 R.C. Jenkins, The Jesuits in China and the Legation of Cardinal de Tournon, p. 92.

with their rites. On April 16, 1717 the Emperor K'ang Hsi proscribed the practice of the Christian religion throughout the Empire and persecution immediately broke out in the provinces. 2) On November 4, 1721 Mezzabarba, the Papal legate to China, granted eight permissions allowing kneelings and offerings before the amended tablets of Confucius and ancestors as well as before the coffin of a deceased person providing they were preceded by the necessary explanations but this did not settle the conflict and when, in 1723, Yun Cheng succeeded K'ang Hsi as Emperor, he relentlessly persecuted the Christians. 3) The missionaries were divided as to whether they could conscientiously follow Mezzabarba's rules. The discussion was ended July 11, 1742 by the Constitution Ex quo singulari given by Pope Benedict XIV which revoked all permissions granted by Mezzabarba. Thus the Constitution Ex illa die of 1715 requiring an oath, written by their own hands, on the part of the missionaries, stating that they would not permit converts to continue ancestral rites, was sustained. This requirement is still enforced. The controversy thus ended in a complete victory for the Dominicans and a complete defeat for the Jesuits.

Personal factors must have added to these conflicts. On

the one hand, there had been little intercourse between East and West and they did not know one another. China had a long and glorious history of which she was naturally proud. In her isolated position, surrounded by vassal nations, she fondly imagined that she was the center of the universe. K'ang Hsi had unique and absolute power over a vast empire and he "lost face" tremendously before his people when a controversy which was being waged among his own subjects (though foreigners were the causal agents in the persons of the Franciscans and the Jesuits) was first referred to a foreign potentate instead of to himself. The course that the conflict took only served to increase the chagrin and to intensify the convictions of the Emperor. On the other hand, the pride of Pope Clement XI had been injured by the submission of the matter by the Jesuits to a pagan prince whom the Pope regarded as unfit to decide upon religious issues.

The results of the controversy were far-reaching. The conflict cost the Roman Catholics an excellent opportunity to capture China. The Emperor K'ang Hsi's mother, wife and half the court were baptized Christians³ and the Emperor

³ Juliet Bredon, Peking, p. 474.

himself had agreed to become a Christian and to promote the Christian religion by Imperial power provided only that he were allowed to continue his royal tradition of ancestor worship. 4 The history of Catholicism in China might have been very different if the Jesuits had not consulted K'ang Hsi and thus strongly aroused the displeasure of the Holy Father at Rome, but it may be questioned whether, in that case, their cause would not have been so compromised, and would not gradually have become so adulterated by the infiltration of non-Christian beliefs and practices, that they would have shared the fate of the Nestorians, whose doom was sealed when they began to compromise with the non-Christian religions which surrounded them and were swallowed up, slowly but surely, leaving no trace, except the monument near Sianfu, of the vast numbers of adherents which they once had.

Protestants have no supreme spiritual head to whom matters of doctrine may be referred for settlement. They are not united in a single organization like the Roman Catholics. In view of these facts, it is surprising to find that the

4 Chinese Recorder, January, 1929, article by H.H.Kung on "How Does the Modernization of China Affect Christianity?", p.14.

attitude adopted towards ancestor worship by Protestant missionaries has been so nearly uniform. Although they come from many different lands, speak many languages, and represent many denominations, yet they have presented an almost unbroken front against ancestor worship. It has long furnished a live topic for discussion but there has been no crisis in Protestant missions similar to the one among the Catholics. Ancestor worship was one of the subjects discussed at the first General Conference of Protestant Missionaries which was held at Shanghai in 1877. Dr. Yates read a lengthy paper setting forth many of the evil effects of the worship and condemning the rites in toto. The paper was followed by discussion but no one present disagreed with the contention that ancestor worship was "idolatrous". The next General Conference, in 1890, was also held at Shanghai. This time there were two papers on ancestor worship. The Rev. W.A.P. Martin, a scholar of note and friend of the literati, read a paper on the subject "The Worship of Ancestors-a Plea for Toleration" which stressed some of the good points of ancestor worship and suggested means for removing all features that might be regarded as objectionable. He was impressed by the great opposition to Christianity by the literati because of their

desire to retain the traditional ancestral rites and he felt that this opposition might be removed by purifying and retaining the rites. In this way, the Christian movement would grow rapidly and most of the opposition would disappear. The more orthodox position was taken in a paper by the Rev. H. Blodget which advocated that no concessions be made. After some heated discussion, a sudden, emotional, and dramatic action decided the matter. The Rev. J. Hudson Taylor, of the China Inland Mission, arose and said, "I trust that all those who wish to raise an indignant protest against the conclusion of Dr. Martin's paper will signify it by rising." Almost the whole audience accepted the challenge and rose to its feet. The Centenary Missionary Conference was held at Shanghai in 1907. A commission including a number of able men had been at work for several years preparing a report on ancestor worship and this report contained certain constructive proposals which were adopted. The discussion was much less heated than it had been at the two previous conferences and a much more tolerant spirit prevailed, though it was still felt that no compromise must be made. When the National Christian Council met at Shanghai in 1922, there was no discussion of the subject. A typical example of the orthodox Protestant

missionary attitude towards ancestor worship is found in the statement of Dr. Arthur H. Smith, who was for over fifty years a gifted and consecrated missionary in China. He said, "Either Christianity will never be introduced into China, or ancestral worship will be given up, for they are contradictions. In the death struggle between them the fittest only will survive." ⁵ At the present time there are an increasing number who are taking a more liberal and sympathetic attitude. They contend that Christianity will never make much progress in China until this question is again faced and decided differently. Most of the studies of ancestor worship and attacks upon it were made by missionaries. They are generally silent on the topic now.

In former times, converts sometimes were required to destroy or surrender ancestral tablets before they could become Christians, but the number who destroyed them was small because the other members of the family who were not Christians would object, and the convert would often let them keep the tablet, but would not himself sacrifice to it. In some cases, the tablet was put away in a box to be kept but not worshipped.

⁵ A. H. Smith, *Chinese Characteristics*, p. 185.

There are some who still contend that the tablet must be destroyed or given away, but others feel that no harm is done by keeping the tablet, as long as rites are not performed before it by the convert. It is understood, of course, that the convert cannot control the actions of the other members of the family. Many Chinese Christians feel that it is unnecessary to go to the length of burning the tablets or giving them away and it offends their non-Christian relatives less when the tablets are simply put away for safe-keeping.

Professor Addison gives the following explanation of the reason for the uniformity of the Protestant attitude, "The prime reason for this Protestant uniformity is of course the plain fact that ancestor worship, as we have seen, is a genuine religion in the lives of many millions and closely akin to religion in the lives of many others. The religious side of ancestor worship was too obvious to be ignored and too dangerous to be permitted." 6

6 J.T. Addison, Chinese Ancestor Worship, p. 79. In this excellent monograph, Professor Addison has made a valuable compilation of facts and views from the sources. It is the best book on the subject that has yet appeared.

Most of the popular opposition to Christianity is due to ancestor worship. It acts as a hindrance to the spread of Christianity, especially among the educated and higher classes. It does not offer so much difficulty in the case of the lower classes. Hence it is not surprising that most of the early converts to Christianity in China were drawn from the lower classes. The higher classes will readily leave behind them their Buddhism and their Taoism but not their ancestor worship. It is admitted that if the Christian Church would compromise in regard to ancestor worship, the number of converts would be greatly increased. In the paper which he read before the Missionary Conference at Shanghai in 1890, the Rev. W.A.P. Martin characterized ancestor worship as the most serious impediment to the conversion of China and adduced many proofs in support of this assertion. The man who discontinues ancestral rites is charged with being unfilial and this, in the eyes of the Chinese, is the supreme social offense. He has failed to keep faith with former generations and should be regarded as a social outcast. He has deserted his ancestors and inconvenienced them, if indeed he has not left them helpless in a state of misery. Imagine how much moral courage it takes for an only son to become a Christian when

he realizes that the hopes of his parents for the continuance of the traditional rites in their behalf are centered in him alone! There came to the writer's attention the case of a Christian student, the only son of a widow, who was forced to forego the pleasure of a visit home during the Chinese New Year holidays because such a visit would have involved endless argument over the question of his keeping up the ancestral rites for the family. Is there any wonder that when a young boy begins to study Christianity, the family strenuously objects and brings as much pressure to bear as possible, lest he should be converted and discontinue the ancestral rites? What child enjoys the thought that his acceptance of Christianity means that his parents will be left to suffer uncared for in Hades? Hence it is that the Chinese are willing to give up the worship of idols and every other form of religion but they will give up ancestor worship last of all. Many of those who have given up everything else, will get the family ancestral tablets out at the New Year season and perform the rites before them, even though they may neglect them the rest of the year. The New Year season is the time of great temptation for Chinese Christians. No other feature of Christianity arouses the resentment and

opposition of the Chinese so much as its attitude towards ancestor worship. They feel that ancestor worship is their life. Chinese persecution of Christianity has been due, in large measure, to the attitude of Christianity towards ancestor worship. Lafcadio Hearn held that Christianity should have tolerated ancestor worship. He wrote, "The East has been tolerant of all creeds that do not assault the foundations of its society, and if Western Missions had been wise enough to leave these foundations alone—to deal with the Ancestor Cult as Buddhism did, and to show the same spirit of tolerance in other directions, the introduction of Christianity on a very extensive scale should have proved an easy matter.----- To demand of a (Chinese) that he cast away or destroy his ancestral tablets is not less irrational and inhuman than it would be to demand of an Englishman or a Frenchman that he destroy his mother's tombstone in proof of his devotion to Christianity." 7

The attitude of Chinese Christians towards ancestor worship is by no means uniform. The great majority regard

7 Juliet Bredon, Peking, Lafcadio Hearn quoted in footnote at bottom of page 475.

it as idolatrous and have abandoned the rites, though many of them retain the tablets. There is some question as to how far this attitude is simply an echo of what they have heard from their foreign missionary teachers. Pitcher gives the opinion of a Chinese leader as follows, "The Rev. Y.K.Yen, a noted Chinese preacher, said, 'All Chinese worship is for selfishness. If these people did not think the gods could affect men's bodies, the temples would be deserted, and ancestral worship would decline.'" ⁸ Very few Chinese have denounced ancestor worship in toto in print. A larger number have denounced it from the pulpit. During the last few years there has been an increasing number who wish to retain and modify ancestor worship so as to make it compatible with Christian principles. Describing the type of Church which Chinese Christians want, Dr. H.H.Kung, a high government official who is a lineal descendant of Confucius and a Christian, writes, "We want a Christian Church which suits the Chinese and is understood by them. It should be adapted to those conditions and customs, which are closely interwoven with the social fabric of our lives. For instance, ancestor worship

⁸ Pitcher, In and About Amoy, p. 73.

should be regarded as a manifestation of the principle of honoring the dead and should not be regarded as a practice disloyal to the teachings of Christ." 9 S.J.Chuan writes,"If the ceremony is performed merely as a kind of idolatrous ritual,it certainly does not fit in with Christian principles and practice,but if the participant in the ceremony does so with genuine feelings of respect and affection,it need not be objected to by the Christian Church. After all is it not true that the real attitude of mind determines the fitness of religious practices?" 10 The attitude of another Chinese leader,T.M.Van,of the Editorial Staff of the Y.M.C.A.,is worth quoting,"We cannot get rid of Ancestor Worship entirely. To try to do so is to work against the psychology of the Chinese people as a whole. People argue that if we want to remember our ancestors we must use other methods. This is quite possible. As it is,Ancestor Worship has become a custom and,besides,nothing in it is utterly wrong. It is an heritage

9 Chinese Recorder,January,1929,article by H.H.Kung on "How Does the Modernization of China Affect Christianity?",p.16.

10 Chinese Recorder,April,1928,"Present-Day Attitude Towards 'Ancestor Worship',a Symposium",S.J.Chuan,p.231.

of China's civilization; the basis of good morality and ethics. What we should do is to guard ourselves against the evils of Ancestor Worship, and try constantly to improve it. It should always be a means of remembering the ancestors.

"Catholics during the Ming dynasty suffered a great deal because they had an internal debate over Ancestor Worship. Finally, they were not allowed by the Chinese government to preach the Gospel because of their disapproval of it. It looks as though the Protestants are facing the same disaster by trying to get rid of Ancestor Worship. Many Chinese hesitate to join the Church because it does not allow them to worship their ancestors. In fact the faith of Christianity and Ancestor Worship, the purpose of which is to remember ancestors, can get along side by side. A Christian is to be encouraged in his remembrance of ancestors. But careful consideration must be given to the forms of ritual. In bowing before one's ancestor, one is not necessarily worshipping his ancestor in the same sense as when he kneels before God. However, all these rituals can be discussed and changed but the idea of remembering one's ancestor must be advocated and kept on. We must think out some ritual for the remembrance of ancestors so that not only may Christians approve of it

but non-Christians as well. Then perhaps, more Chinese would join the Church." 11 A number of Christians would like to see some such plan worked out so that the values of ancestor worship might be retained while its baneful effects are eliminated. There are not wanting those who claim that ancestor worship may be continued by Christians without modification. For example, T.C. Woo writes, "The Chinese missions have long laid down a rule against ancestor worship. They consider this act as entirely unchristian and therefore they strictly forbid their Chinese converts from observing this age-old tradition. Since my baptism in 1913, I have been making periodical offerings to my ancestors as usual and the church has not shown any signs of interference. Therefore ancestor worship has become no problem to me. I have argued with many missionaries about this topic; and many who are contemplating to become Christians have come to me to ask me about this same question, but my answer is always this; you can become a Christian and you can also continue to make your periodical offerings to your ancestors.-----

11 Chinese Recorder, April, 1928, "Present-Day Attitude Towards 'Ancestor Worship', a Symposium", T.M. Van, pp. 229-230.

"Generally speaking ancestor worship does not conflict with any of the Christian principles and it is a nice traditional rite of the Chinese people. The churches should not forbid this. Although I admit that this kind of tradition has grown out of its original meaning and many have practiced it in superstitious form,yet I must say that there are also many ceremonies of the church which,until the present day, have become mere remnant formalities and are not appreciated by most of the people. But the churches never cancel these ceremonies because of this. Therefore the churches may advise their members not to worship their ancestors as God,but they should not forbid them from worshipping." 12

Can ancestor worship be reformed or must it be entirely overthrown? Is it possible to remove all of the objectionable features from the rites and still retain the primary purpose of remembering ancestors? Is a compromise which will be acceptable to both Christians and non-Christians,and which will result in a great influx into the Church,feasible and

12 West China Missionary News,December,1925,article by T.C.Woo on "A Chinese Christian on Ancestor Worship", translated from the magazine "Truth".

desirable? Different answers have been given to these questions. In the essay which he read before the Missionary Conference at Shanghai in 1890, the Rev. W.A.P. Martin stated, "In dealing with this as a practical question there is, as I conceive, but one rule by which the missionary is bound to be guided, viz., to avoid giving countenance to anything that can fairly be construed as idolatry, a thing forbidden alike by the letter and by the spirit of the Christian Scriptures. That ancestral worship, as commonly practiced, is liable to objection on this ground, I am far from denying, but I maintain that its objectionable features are its excess, not its essence. To prune off excrescences, preserving the good and eliminating the evil, I believe to be altogether feasible; and if so, is that not preferable to the quixotic attempt to destroy the system root and branch?" 13 At the end of his paper, he advanced this proposal, "In conclusion, I respectfully suggest that missionaries refrain from any interference with the native mode of honoring ancestors, and leave the reformation

13 Records of the General Conference of the Protestant Missionaries of China held at Shanghai, 1890, essay by the Rev. W.A.P. Martin on "Ancestor Worship-a Plea for Toleration", p. 625.

of the system to the influence of the divine truth,when it gets a firmer hold on the national mind." 14 As has been noted,the Conference was not ready to take this step. Missionaries are more favorably disposed towards this proposal at the present time than they were in 1890,but many changes have taken place in the meantime,and Chinese are more and more taking the lead in ecclesiastical matters,and the question will have to be settled by them in the end. As an illustration of the dangers of compromise with native customs and of being influenced too much by environment,the fate of the Jewish colony at Keifengfu is often mentioned. According to historical records,this colony was,at one time, large and flourishing. Its members desired to appear to be like the Confucianists and in time they disappeared. Partaking of the color of those about them in order not to appear too strikingly different,their own separate color gradually became more and more diluted until finally it

14 Records of the General Conference of the Protestant Missionaries of China held at Shanghai,1890,essay by the Rev. W.A.P.Martin on "Ancestor Worship-a Plea for Toleration", p.631.

faded out of sight. No adequate history has yet been written of this colony and not a great deal is known of the details of its history. Perhaps, the fact that the colony was completely isolated from all other Jews because of the poor communications had much to do with its disappearance.

Many hold that ancestor worship cannot be reformed or modified without destroying its essence. For example, Pitcher writes, "If there is any idolatry in China, it is found in ancestral worship; and the Conference of Shanghai (1890) did no wiser thing than when it passed a resolution certifying that 'idolatry is an essential constituent of ancestral worship.' The Centenary Conference of 1907 reaffirmed the action of 1890. Some would say, Modify it. How modify it? Eradicate its bad features and retain only the good? Stripped of its idolatrous features, there would be nothing left to hold it together as a custom; for without this idea of a living, hearing, ever-present, ever-active spirit the whole structure would collapse, because there would be nothing left but sentiment. There would be no more in it to a native of China than there is in a game of baseball.

"Reward-long life, prosperity and happiness-is the passion that lies at the bottom of all his outward reverence

and devotion-not native pride,not native glory. He makes a sort of insurance policy out of his belief,from which he expects both reward and protection,with a high-tariff plank against the introduction,into his little circle of existence, of sickness,and trouble,and adversity. Remove this feature and you remove the bottom out of the whole system." 15

The objectionable features in ancestor worship are due to superstitions which have grown up in the course of the centuries in connection with the worship. Chief among these, is the belief that parents are gods. If the elements of adoration,supplication,propitiation,and veneration could be removed,most of the opposition to ancestor worship would fade away. The offering of food may be regarded as purely symbolical. The ancestors of Chinese may be said to no more eat the food which is offered to them than the ancestors of foreigners smell the flowers which their loved ones put on their graves from time to time. The use of the tablet as a device to refresh the memory would not be objectionable. It is only when the tablet is set aside by the dotting ceremony to be the abode of a spirit,which otherwise would be desolate,

15 Pitcher,In and About Amoy,pp.72-73.

that it becomes more than a memorial. When the tablet is replaced by a large portrait, which is not regarded as the abode of the spirit of the deceased, this objection is removed. The burning of incense makes the ceremony much like that before idols. The use of invocations is also out of place. The mass of feng-shui doctrines which have become associated with ancestor worship are most enslaving.

There are certain antidotes which will serve to remove many, if not all, of the objectionable features connected with ancestral rites. The ignorance of the masses is one of the main reasons for the continuance of ancestor worship. They keep it up as an unreasoned tradition and it is among this class that the superstitions hold sway. With the advancement of education, many of these superstitions will be swept away. They cannot stand in the light of true knowledge. Popular education is making good progress in China considering the great mass with which it has to deal, and it may ~~be~~ confidently be expected to make greater strides in the future. Positive religious teaching as to the future life and the nature of the soul are urgently needed. Such knowledge would purge the rites of many of their baser elements. On rational grounds, ancestor worship is open to many objections. For example,

it may be asked which of the three souls is the real person, or are there three souls produced after death. It may be pointed out that four or five meals a year for the spirits are a poor substitute for three meals a day. The question may well be asked as to what becomes of the ancestors more than five generations removed who are not remembered in the domestic rites and who are thus unprovided for unless their tablets have been removed to the clan ancestral temple. As a matter of fact, these criticisms are commonly passed on the practice. Y.T. Pyun, a Korean, suggests three charges, aside from religious considerations entirely, which may be directed against ancestor worship. In the first place, it may be pointed out that the rites as carried on are often superstitious and thus incompatible with the progressive state of the world in general. Secondly, ancestor worship may be arraigned on economic grounds. In particular, burial rites are very expensive. Families often become insolvent on account of the great display which they make on the occasion of the rite. A third argument which may be advanced is that there should be more attention paid to parents and other elders while they are alive and less after they are dead. Duty to ancestors requires not that their memory be commemorated in such a

disproportionate and irrational way, but rather by bringing up children to be more worthy of their ancestors. 16 The spread of scientific knowledge and thought will help to purify ancestor worship. Social clubs or community houses might fulfill the social function which clan temples have had. Many Christians are hanging large pictures of their ancestors on the walls of their homes in order to remember them better. They do not sacrifice to these pictures. Even with non-Christians, pictures are in many cases taking the place of the tablets. In one case, a little shrine was noted with a magnifying glass placed in front of a picture of an ancestor so as to enlarge it to almost life-size. The abolition of the priesthood would assist in purifying ancestor worship, for the priests foster superstitions with regard to the spirits in order to further their own mercenary ends.

The opinion of the majority of Chinese and foreign scholars would seem to favor the idea that the practice of ancestor worship will be continued by many, though perhaps with some change in form. The rites are changing and will change even more but, under a changed form and purged of

16 Y.T. Pyun, *My Attitude Toward Ancestor-Worship*, pp. 83-84.

superstition, for many people at least, the custom will continue. These changes will be so great as to affect the interpretation of the fundamental meaning of the rites and to remove many, if not all, of the superstitious elements. Ancestor worship will lose out only as regards the form gone through. The old reverence will still be there and it will gain in another form, namely a greater trust in the past and a revival of ancient ideas. There is too much of value in the custom to expect it to be lightly abandoned. Its religious elements will, however, be removed. These changes will take place very slowly for the great mass of the Chinese nation cannot be leavened in a day. In some form, it will probably continue as a respectful, memorial service. There is much good in it which should not be lost. If the burning of incense and the kotow were removed, much of the objection to it would melt away. Since the establishment of the Republic, the low bow has been substituted by many people for the kotow as being more in accord with the principles of a democracy. Ancestors may rightfully and profitably be looked up to, as Hwuy-Ung suggested, as examples in right-doing and warnings against wrong-doing. 17 Even if all of the rites

17 Hwuy-Ung, A Chinaman's Opinion of Us and of His Own People, p.96.

were dropped, the ideal of obeying, honoring, and remembering parents and other elders should be retained. The religion of ancestor worship should be put to death but its ethical values should be conserved and strengthened.

The popular conception is that when a man becomes a Christian, he deserts his ancestors. There is great need for positive teaching on the part of Christian evangelists and preachers which will counteract this harmful propaganda. Practical, constructive measures have been suggested for Christians and have been used in many parts of China to good effect. One of these suggestions is the observance of an annual memorial day when services are held in the church or at the cemetery in commemoration of ancestors. T.C. Bau writes of trying this, "Ancestral worship has been adapted and given a Christian content, so that now it takes on the nature of a memorial service. A number of Christian families have used this method of honoring their ancestors by going twice a year to their graves to hold special services. They feel that these services do not in any way conflict with their Christian ideas and do open the door for Confucianists more easily to understand and accept Christianity by approaching it along an avenue already familiar to them. The writer

believes that there will be more and more Christians who will make this adaptation of ancestral worship, so that it will be a help rather than a hindrance to the development of Christianity in China." 18 Some Chinese churches observe an annual "Parents' Day" in place of the "Mother's Day" and "Father's Day" which were borrowed from America and observed at first. At this time, special stress is laid upon the importance of filial piety and an effort is made to have a large number of the children of the congregation present. Other churches do not confine the service to the young but make it more of a memorial service in which the adults also take part. It might not be a bad idea to call it a "Remembrance Day" and make it somewhat similar to "Armistice Day" in the West. This would emphasize the commemorative aspect of ancestor worship. It might be spent at the graves or in the presence of the ancestral pictures in the home. The observance of a day like this, does much to ^{refute} ~~disprove~~ the ~~truthfulness of~~ the charge so often made against Christians that they are ungrateful to their ancestors and ^{that they are} unfilial.

18 China Christian Year Book, 1926, article by T.C. Bau on "Changes in the Chinese Church", p. 136.

wretches. Another suggestion has to do with the use of the enlarged portraits in place of the tablets of ancestors as has already been mentioned. Another common charge made against Christians is that they are careless of family history and family records. In the eyes of the Chinese, this is a very serious charge. It can be met by preserving books recording family history and by keeping family records, such as the names, pictures, dates of birth and death, and brief biographies of the parents, in the family Bible. The Chinese say that foreigners do not remember their ancestors like they should and when they see their own countrymen imitating the foreigner in this respect, the expression "foreign Christian" becomes even more a term of reproach. Christian memorial tablets are sometimes placed in churches. Memorial halls or churches are erected to the memory of a sainted ancestor. This is a much wiser use of the money than was made when it was expended in feasting in connection with a funeral. Another suggestion has to do with the care that is taken of cemeteries or isolated graves. At Ching Ming or some other appropriate time they should be visited and repaired and beautified. Monuments are erected to the memory of the dead and flowers are placed on the grave from time to time

or are planted there. There are now many Christian cemeteries. Christians sometimes hold a memorial service at Ching Ming at the cemetery. (See Illustration on page 195). Ching Ming always comes near Easter and it furnishes an excellent occasion for dwelling on the themes of immortality and the resurrection of the dead. It is quite evident that it is the duty of Christians to set a good example by remembering their ancestors and being filial to them when living, rather than postponing this action until after their death. The children of Christians should be taught that they are under obligation to be more filial rather than less filial than their non-Christian friends, but that they must express this attitude in sensible and helpful ways rather than by the use of superstitious methods. Another proposal is that more stress should be laid upon the Christian teaching of the "Communion of the Saints". Dead and living Christians are united in Christ and have communion and fellowship in Him. They are not dependent upon one another and love, rather than pity or fear, should characterize their mutual relations. The living are to follow the saints who have passed on into the other world in virtuous and godly living and thus come to those unspeakable joys prepared for

those who unfeignedly love God. There are two ideas here which parallel similar conceptions in ancestor worship and which appeal to the Chinese strongly. The communion of the living and the dead in the spirit banquet in the ancestral rites is but a reaching after the truth which is found in the Christian conception of the "Communion of the Saints". The imitation of the virtues of those who have passed on is also a part of ancestor worship and the Chinese would be glad to continue this valuable feature. The Christian church in China would do well to emphasize All Saints day as it is observed in the Church of England. Instead of ancestral rites at the times of births, deaths, the dedication of new buildings and removals, it is suggested that Christian services be held. In the early morning and on wedding days, the Christian God should be worshipped instead of Heaven. All of these suggestions have this in common that they are attempts to provide for the legitimate expression of the worthy desires that underlie ancestor worship, such as the commemorative, filial, and educational motives, while at the same time safeguarding the religious life by eliminating all ideas of propitiation or of mutual dependence.

Christianity must take the place of the religious

elements of ancestor worship. Millions in China are seeking for peace by means of offerings and sacrifice. Do not the words of Hosea, "For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt-offerings" ¹⁹ have a message for China to-day? The amount of incense that is burned in Old Cathay in ancestral rites in one year staggers the imagination and yet the very desperation with which men cling to these practices is but further evidence that man is incurably religious. Where the religious elements in ancestor worship are passing away, either atheism or Christianity is taking their place. Buddhism and Taoism are not virile enough to make an appeal and are also fettered by superstition. The tremendous changes now taking place, slowly but surely, in the attitude of the Chinese people towards the religious elements in ancestor worship, are presenting a stirring challenge to the Christian church to take advantage of the opportunity thus offered. One of the greatest hindrances to the acceptance of the Gospel is being removed. No other religion is ready to make a bid for the heart of China. It would appear that the Christian movement has more to fear from a

¹⁹ Hosea 6:6.

too rapid decline in ancestor worship, and a consequent surrender of religion altogether, than from a more gradual decline, for, as yet, the masses of the Chinese people are but little affected by Christianity and if the conservative, binding element which held society together and furnished certain important social and moral sanctions is suddenly taken from the people, they will be left with nothing on which to build. Social and individual restraints must be prepared which will hold the individual and the nation to a Christian course of action when the old restraints have been abandoned. The religious void must be filled by the positive teaching of a conquering faith.

Christianity fulfills the desire for the highest filial ideals and standards. There is nothing in Christianity that would forbid the love, gratitude, respect, and filial devotion which should characterize the attitude of men everywhere towards their ancestors. And these elements are, after all, the loftiest part of ancestor worship. Robert E. Speer writes, "No people in the world should sympathize more than Christians with the Chinese in their devotion to their ancestors and in their exaltation of filial piety into the greatest of virtues. A true and complete loyalty to the great Father God

goes best with true loyalty to the earthly fatherhoods, which are named after the heavenly. And Chinese filial piety, when once its pagan elements are dissolved, is a noble base on which to build a Christian society." 20 Christianity provides for a fuller expression of affection than ancestor worship. It provides for the affection of a parent for a deceased child who died before reaching its maturity and for the affection of a husband for his wife. These are not provided for by ancestor worship. The Christian religion teaches that the dead should be properly cared for and given a decent burial. Abraham was careful to buy the cave of Machpelah in order to provide a family burial ground and before he died, Joseph gave strict orders that his bones were to be carried back to the land of his fathers for burial. The teaching of the Bible on this subject should receive more emphasis in Christian schools and from the pulpit. Many Chinese think that Christians neglect their dead. Christianity teaches that immortality is a fact and that this life is but a preparation for the life in the next world. It supplements and completes the doctrines of ancestor worship with reference to the future life as well as refutes their

20 Speer, The Light of the World, p.148.

errors. Christianity opposes only those elements in ancestor worship which are false and degrading. Christianity as it is exemplified in the lives of Western Christians is not perfect. The church in the West will be enriched by her contact with China and with the Chinese conception of filial piety, by being inspired to study anew the life of her Head, who was truly filial. She has perhaps fallen short of His ideal. He represents the Chinese as well as the Western ideal of a filial son. In this way, the Chinese will make a contribution to the world's understanding of Jesus. For thirty years almost all that is related of the life of Jesus is: "And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them". 21 In His hour of death, He tenderly thought of the welfare of His mother. Indicating His beloved disciple, He said, "Behold thy son!" and to John, "Behold thy mother!" 22

Chinese Christians, guided by the Spirit of God, must settle the question of the attitude that Christianity shall assume towards ancestor worship. Missionaries may continue a scientific study of the subject, and with a sympathetic

21 Luke 2:51

22 John 19:26-27.

attitude may stand ready to help if they are called upon, but in the last analysis, the Chinese Christians will have to determine the stand to be taken. All that missionaries can do is to give to the Chinese the best that they themselves have received and then leave it to the Christian consciences of the Chinese to settle. No fear need be felt lest the Chinese will be too lenient with ancestor worship. Many of them now condemn it more severely than the foreigners. There are others, of course, who condemn it less. The Chinese have been raised in a system where ancestor worship was central and they can judge better how to deal with it than foreigners. Perhaps they can work out some plan or method whereby its permanent values may be conserved. It can be safely left in their hands.

APPENDIX ONE

The spirit-world banknote illustrated on page 53 bears the following inscriptions:

"Bank of Hades. (Serial Number) 5760. Ten thousand dollars. Exchangeable for silver at par. Not responsible for lost notes. Exchangeable forever. In the future life, the gods curse." There follows a Buddhist formula which is supposed to be efficacious in averting the evil effects of such a curse.

The spirit-world banknote illustrated on page 96 bears the following inscriptions:

"Bank of Hades and Heaven. One hundred thousand dollars. Counterfeiters will be punished according to law."

The back of both notes bears the inscriptions:

"The power of Buddha is infinite. The bearer of this note may use same at will in the abode of the spirits, the happiest world." Both notes also have purported signatures by their officers on the back.

APPENDIX TWO

The Illustration on page 64 shows the inscription that is printed upon one of the varieties of paper money which is burned at the grave for the benefit of deceased ancestors. This type is used by the Taoists. The circle with the square hole in the center is a representation of the cash money which was in common use up until a few years ago but has now been discarded in many sections of China. Near the center may be seen the eight diagrams so inseparably connected with Chinese thought throughout the ages. In addition, there are a number of characters systematically and symmetrically arranged in a circle. They convey the idea that a person in the other world will be judged according to the deeds done in the body in this world. It is claimed that the burning of these sheets of paper money will assist the soul to receive rewards and to be promoted more rapidly in the other world. The priests teach that the rank of a soul in the other world is in direct ratio to the amount of money expended in its behalf in this world by its relatives. A belief in this doctrine on the part of not a few people insures revenue for the priests.

The Illustration on page 154 shows the inscription that

is printed on a type of paper money which is burned at the graves by Buddhists. Each of the three concentric circles contains incantations that serve definite purposes. The outside circle guarantees that when the soul transmigrates it will rest in a worthy incarnation. According to Buddhist doctrine, the enemies that one has made upon earth continue to exist in the other world and lose none of their animosity. Hence the middle circle offers protection to the soul by insuring the abolition of any animosities which may exist between it and any old enemies who may be re-incarnated as devils in the other world. The inner circle supplies what may have been lacking in the treatment of living creatures. It is a Buddhist doctrine that merit may be accumulated by releasing living creatures which are fettered or imprisoned. It is held that life is sacred and that fish and animals have souls like the soul of man. Since cattle, swine, sheep, poultry, etc. have souls similar to the human soul, it is regarded as an offense to eat the bodies in which they are incarnated in this world. One who transgresses in this respect will have to face these disembodied souls in the other world and answer to the accusations which they bring before the judge. This circle wards off any evil influences that might threaten, due to transgressions in this matter.

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